Peso plunges to new record low of 55.73 to $1

'Tuko' interrupts GMA talk in Lucena

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—A rooster interrupted the President yesterday—and still received an amused reaction from the famously

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Stand up to China, Taiwan urges RP NEWS/A7
- Kidnapped student still alive, says Reyes NEWS/A3
- Attackwounds vice mayor, kills pal ACROSS/A17

Saturday, November 29, 2003 • 34 pages / vol. 18 / no. 254

Palace says GMA leader of 'real world'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana, Martin U. Mariñ and Norman Bordadora

MALACAÑANG yesterday downplayed the results of the latest survey on preferred presidential candidates, saying President Macapagal-Arroyo was the leader with experience in the "real world."

"The real world is one where the leader takes the actions and struggles with the people to fight crisis and to build a nation," the President's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

Reacting to the November survey of Pulse Asia Inc. where the President ranked third behind ex-Sen. Raul Roco and action star Fernando Poe Jr., Bunye said Ms Macapagal had "immersed herself in the footsteps of the people and shown the way through hard work, sacrifice and leadership by example."

"She has been a serving, performing and teaching President, and will continue to be so despite the obstacles being thrown across her path every day," he said.

But in a statement, the militant labor alliance Bilgang Mayo Uno said that workers have not felt the supposed 4.4 percent growth in the economy in the third quarter and they remained poor, hungry and exploited.

It also said the number of unemployed had risen during Ms Macapagal's term.

"More people go jobless and hungry every day," BMU chair Elmer Labog said.

He added: "Growing economic statistics are not enough indicators of economic progress. Workers need actual economic relief from the daily burden of price hikes, low wages and financial

Bush sneak visit to Iraq stuns GIs

PRESIDENT Bush serves up turkey to US troops at the Baghdad international airport during a surprise 2 1/2-hour Thanksgiving Day visit. The American president flew from his ranch in Crawford, Texas, to Baghdad for the top-secret trip that was announced to the press only after he had left Iraq.

Top-secret trip dubbed a PR coup

BAGHDAD—President George W. Bush roused US troops in Iraq on Thursday by turning up at their Thanksgiving dinner after a risky flight into Baghdad Airport, saying he was "just looking for a warm meal."

During his lightning trip amid mounting casualties and political pressure at home, Bush thanked American soldiers for "sacrificing for our freedom and our peace," and assured the Iraqi Governing Council that the United States would stay the course while urging them to work harder to prepare for next year's handover of sovereignty.

In an elaborate plan to ensure his security, Bush slipped away from his Texas ranch on Wednesday night, arrived in Iraq on Thursday and spent 2 1/2 hours with the troops, becoming the first US president to visit the country.

In a sign of the extraordinary security precautions, television reports said US authorities would have called off the visit if bad news been leaked in advance.

News of his visit was not released until the presidential jet Air Force One had already left Baghdad, after a missile was fired last weekend at a DHL civilian cargo plane, forcing an emergency landing here.

Bush arrived back in Washington shortly after midnight on Friday to complete a 20-hour round trip from Texas.

At the heavily fortified airport where conditions he did not leave throughout his stay, Bush joked about 600 troops and several members of the Iraqi Governing Council in a mess hall.

"I was just looking for a warm meal somewhere," Bush told the soldiers,

Peso plunges to new record low of 55.73 to $1

By Clarissa S. Batino and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

POLITICAL and economic anxieties combined to pummel the local currency and stock market yesterday, sending the peso plunging to a fresh record low and share prices diving to their lowest in seven weeks.

The peso, which has remained volatile since Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho announced his resignation a week ago, weakened for the third straight day and plummeted yesterday to a new record closing low of P55.73 from P55.59 the other day.

Ignoring news of a better-than-expected economic growth in the third quarter, stock prices closed lower for the second straight day with the 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange index sinking down at 1,703.87, its lowest close in seven weeks.

"What's weighing on the market is actually the political uncertainty," BPI Securities senior manager Roberto Cano said. "I think now that some are starting to announce their intention to run in next year's elections, people are watching to see how the political race will shape up."

Currency traders said the fraught festival of Filipinos had stayed away from the market as indicated by a small turnover of $107.7 million.

The peso opened week at P55.72 yes-

POLITICS OF A DIVISION

Senate President Franklin Drilon casts his oath as Liberal Party chair before Rep. Ruben Ancot, LP secretary general, and party standard-bearer Sen. Manuel Roxas and Gov. (Story on Page A2.)

Biazon joins Roco camp; Lito O sees landslide win

SEN. Rodolfo Biazon is joining the camp of Raul Roco because, in his view, the latter is the best division among the presidential contenders.

On indefinite leave of absence from the opposition talkes to Democratizing Filipino, Biazon yesterday said he would join the Aksyon Reporma Pruudl coalition of Roco, Renato de Villa and Emilio "Lito" Osmeña when he seeks reelection in 2004.

Biazon said in a phone interview that he met with Roco and De Villa Thursday night and presented to them the five "advocacies," including reforms in the military and police, that he had long been pushing in the Senate.

"And they accepted (the advocacies) and will have these incorporated in the coalition's platform of government," he said.

Speaking with the reporters Thursday morning, Biazon said he would support neither Sen. Panfilo Lacson nor Fernando Poe Jr. as the LDP-standard bearer because each was perceived to be an "extension" of ousted President Joseph Estrada.

He said no electoral contest between as Estrada allies ego and President Macapagal-Arroyo would again be divisive. "We're bringing back like it and like it."

In a phone interview yesterday, Roco welcomed Biazon's support.

He said Biazon will be joining under the Aksyon Reporma Pruudl alliance as a guest candidate, but would not be seen in as a member of any of the three parties.

"We didn't impose that condition because we're an alliance," Roco said. "to an alliance we have allies. We've agreed that he'll be an official candidate of the alliance."

Roco confirmed that he met with the

Like Erap, FPJ now butt of nasty jokes

By Christian V. Esguerra

THESE nasty text jokes, the sort that poked fun at ousted President Joseph Estrada, are back.

But this time, the target is his bosom buddy, the newly declared presidential contender Fernando Poe Jr., aka FPJ or "the King" of Philippine movies.

The jokes illustrate the actor's supposed "intellectual inadequacy" for the post that he announced he would be seeking in the 2004 elections. If it's any consolation to him, they have yet to touch on his grammar, probably because he is perceived to speak better English than his disgraced friend.

Still, it is unlikely that Poe and his fans

Rizal, Bonifacio, Mabini, Lapu-Lapu are streets of San Francisco

By Cathy Babao-Cobalin
Good Reader

RIZAL. Bonifacio. Mabini. Lapu-Lapu. The street signs look somewhat out of place in the heart of the South of Market (SoMa) area in San Francisco, California.

SoMa may be the only district in the entire United States where you can find streets named in honor of Filipino heroes. The four streets bound a building called the San Lorenzo Ruiz Center, an apartment complex whose occupants, some 80 percent of them, are Filipino senior citizens.

On one side of the building in the 16 -meandering Mural which traces the evolution of the SoMa as a center for Filipino communities and at the same time depicts images of famous Filipinos who have lived in or visited the area.

Commonly known as MC Carden Elevated the area is a "politicized" or place.

"We also refer to it as our 'Kabayanan,' the heart and active center of a town or municipality. The plaza is the center of inter-village activities such as trade and commerce, fiestas, electoral campaigns, religious activities, and cultural performances. It is where people come for basic health, social and government services. At the same time, it is also a focal point for political demonstrations and mass rallies," Cardeo said.

Cardeo, who reluctantly moved to the United States in 1984 in order to fulfill family obligations, has been very active in promoting ethnic tourism in the SoMa area.

Ethnic tourism, he explained, was the practice of touring, rediscovering and exploring one's cultural heritage and history in a manner that enhances ethnic and self pride, identity and consciousness.

The practice has been an effective means for Filipinos, both residents and visitors to SoMa, to understand the plight of the Filipino in America. When

A1
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2003
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FRIDAY: Hazy to drizzly, with a chance of rain in the afternoon; Palawan will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

LOCAL FORECAST

Metro Manila ... Partly cloudy
Baguio ... Partly cloudy
Dagupan ... Partly cloudy
Laoag ... Partly cloudy
Tuguegarao ... Partly cloudy
Legaspi ... Partly cloudy
Iloilo ... Partly cloudy
Cebu ... Partly cloudy
Zamboanga ... Partly cloudy
Davao ... Partly cloudy
Cagayan de Oro ... Partly cloudy
Iligan ... Partly cloudy
Cotabato ... Partly cloudy
Surigao ... Partly cloudy
Basilan ... Partly cloudy
Jolo ... Partly cloudy
Tawi-tawi ... Partly cloudy

Compromise on Naia 3 still possible

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has not shut the door to an amicable settlement with the Philippine International Air Terminal Co. Inc. (PIATCO).

This after Piatco's biggest foreign shareholder, Fraport AG of Germany, likely concurred with the World Bank to recover roughly $300 million it had invested in the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 project.

In an open forum at the Philippine Business Conference yesterday, President Macapagal said she was still open to a compromise acceptable to the government as long as this did not sacrifice transparency and integrity.

The President said she would wait for the Supreme Court to decide on just compensation before discussing matters with Piatco.

Piatco and Fraport were partners in the terminal construction. Later they had a falling out with each accusing the other of committing anomalies. Piatco was also accused by the government of overpricing the project.

The President said the government would not "be rushed into opening the terminal which was unsolicited before it could even welcome its first plane.

Drilon takes a dig at FPJ

By Christine D. Avendaño

SENATE President Franklin Drilon, the newest member of the Liberal Party, yesterday took a swipe at the presidential candidacy of movie actor Fernando Poe Jr., saying the political campaign in next year's polls should be based on issues and not on personalities.

After taking his oath as LP chair, Drilon lamented that the "game of politics" in the country continues to be a "contest of personalities instead of a battle of ideas."

"With the declaration of course as such that he will run for the presidency, the Barcelona dances," Drilon said in his speech. "What choices are now available to our people?"

The Senate President said that choice would be between candidates who have competence and experience on governance and one who is popular.

He was apparently referring to Poe, who has never held public office but has declared early this week that he will run for election in the May 2004 polls.

The other contenders for the presidency are former Sen. Raul Roco, President Macapagal-Arroyo and Sen. Noelito Lacson.

Drilon said the party has to "educate" the standards of the country's politics, saying that "misguided populism has taken center stage and has contributed to the debasement of politics and governance."

In the Philippines today, he noted that the quest for leadership is once again equated with "sheer popularity" and party bickering, media preselling and outright swashbuckling which have become the order of the day instead of political debates on principles and beliefs.

The Liberal Party, Drilon said, could push for political reforms such as strengthening the political party system.

Drilon said he would push for the passage of the Electoral Reforms Bill not only to regulate campaign contributions and provide state funding to political parties but also to prohibit political opportunism.

Drilon's ouster by behind the Lakas-ng Demokratikong Pilipino in 2000, Drilon assured that LP would be the last party he would join.

He said he joined the party since it is "no kaalam-alam," as shown by the promises it had taken on several issues. These included the Oct. 2 agreement that ousted Joseph Estrada in 2001, the charter change issue and the impeachment bid against Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide.

With his wife Mila by his side, Drilon took his oath as LP chair before LP President Florencio Abad.

Abad agreed with Drilon's call for an issue-based campaign in next year's elections.

"While it is true we cannot avoid personalities being emphasized in the campaign, I think that it is important that those personalities espouse issues," Abad said in a news conference.

He said those personalities should come up with their platforms of government as well as solutions to the country's problems like the Macoy Doldols wealth and the cockfight controversy.

LP members came in full force for Drilon's induction yesterday. Among those who attended were LP chair emeritus Sen. Jovito Salonga, Manila Mayor Jose Atienna Jr., Reps. Benjamin "Boyong" Aguilar III, Rep. Francis "Kit" Tolentino, as well as several congressmen and governors.

At this cleveland, two solons yesterday challenged Poe to base his platform and his economic management adviser on some member over-the-counter.

Rep. Exequiel Javier (Antipas) and Rep. Prospero Negrillo (Davao) said investors want a concrete program of action to be spelled out to Poe's platform on such issues as job creation, investment and peace and order.

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Erap factor still a force to reckon with, says solon

By Carlito Pablo

DESPITE President Joseph Estrada's many woes and facing many problems, but the "Erap factor" remains a force to reckon with in the 2004 presidential elections.

Rep. Edcel Lagman (Albay) said that some 30 percent of the electorate, which is transferable to his dearest candidate, in this case his close friend and former senate colleague, Fernando Poe Jr.

Lagman said the so-called Erap factor could easily offset the built-in advantage of an incumbent running for election like President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"An incumbent president is almost assured of 15 percent of the votes because of the resources and machinery at his or her disposal," Lagman said.

It will be recalled that Estrada won the 1998 elections by a landslide, garnering at least 10 million votes.

Lagman himself had said he wants Poe to run for president, preferring him over Sen. Panfilo Lacson, also a close associate who served as his police chief during his abbreviated term in office.

And if Rep. Jesus Marcos (GIL, Ilocos Norte) is to be believed, Poe does enjoy the backing of businessmen-friends "Tanding" Cojuangco.

If this is so, Poe, who is immensely popular, would have both the political and financial muscle to win Malacañang in 2004.

Cojuangco, Philippine Long Distance Telephone (Ltdat, Negros Occidental) said Marcos had it all wrong when she claimed that Cojuangco was behind Poe's decision to run for presidency.

Stating that he had talked with Cojuangco, Pichay said Cojuangco has "long courted (GMA, President Macapagal)."

"Tanding said that President Macapagal is a formidable candidate," Pichay said.

Cojuangco's Nationalist Peoples Coalition party will meet on Dec. 3 to decide whom to support to seat next national elections.

But the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalayang ng Pilipinas pondered that Cojuangco will make a move for 2004, saying that he will support both Poe and GMA Macapagal.

"That Cojuangco was the key person who convinced FPJ to run is only 10 percent of the truth," Pamalakaya chair Fernando Hicap said in a statement. "The other 90 percent is that Tanding will also support GMA either in a direct or explicit manner."

Hicap said Cojuangco is "amenable" to a Macapagal presidency beyond 2004 because of their supposed close ties that would allow Cojuangco to retain control of the P200-billion coconut levy fund, which is key to his control of the food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.

Business wants special powers for next president

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

BUSINESSMEN want the country's next president to have "special powers" to help hasten his speed up legislative and judicial reforms and spur economic development.

In an interview, former Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry chair Jose T. Sio Jr. said the PCCI has asked legal experts to look into the possibility that the next president have a near-dictatorship on problems and more power to institute reforms that have been stuck in the legislative and judicial back burners.

Sio said the chamber's Legislative Executive Development Advocacy Council (Ledac) has already come up with a draft proposal for the next president.

Ledac chair Jesus Arranz said the proposal will be presented to the business community in the coming days.

He said the proposal will ask the leading presidential candidates—who have agreed to present their economic platforms at the PCCI-sponsored Philippine Business Conference—to support the proposal.

Arranz said the proposal will contain what businessmen expect of the next president in the early days of the new administration

Kidnapped Paco student still alive, says anti-kidnap czar

By TJ Burgonio

ANTI-KIDNAPPING czar Angelo Reyes yesterday denied speculation that a 17-year-old girl, reportedly a student in Paco, Manila, had been killed by the kidnappers who abducted her.

"The chance that she was killed was one in all. We have not received any report that she was killed by the kidnappers," said Reyes, chief of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTF).

The girl, the fourth kidnap victim in a rash wave of kidnappings this month, was reportedly abducted by armed men in front of her school in Paco, Manila on Thursday last week after shooting her uncle and driver, who died of gunshot wounds in the hospital.

The abduction came two days after Cesar Gida executive Ben Chua Jr. was seized in Quezon City last week on his way to work. He was later found dead in the Inter-city Hyatt Hotel in Parañaque City.

Actual operation

As she developed, Reyes disclosed that a platoon of soldiers trained in first-responder combat has been placed under the control of the military Anti-Crime Task Force Unit for Exploitation in Finland's anti-kidnapping operations.

"This is the initial batch, and should the need arise, we will have an additional personnel from the Armed Forces," he said, noting that the soldiers were pulled out from the Army's 46th Infantry Battalion based in Tanay, Rizal.

GA Private Security, Arcai chief and Mikael executive director said the platoon would be placed on standby for the Mikael's anti-kidnapping operations.

The platoon of heavily armed, camouflaged soldiers deployed their skills in a simulated operation to rescue a decoy from the clutches of a fictitious kidnap group inside the former Logistics Command headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo.

Backed by an armored personnel carrier and a team of snipers, the troops stealthily emerged from on a two-story, mansion building, blasted the door with explosives and entered in opening fire as the kidnappers ran amok.

After seven minutes of gunfire, they took down the five armed kidnappers and rescued the male decoy alive. After ensuring the end of hostile fire and explosives, the troops left the scene.

Anti-kidnapping special unit of the Army and the retrieved Director of Criminal Region Command have been tapped by the Malacañang to take charge of the task of kidnappings of Chinese-Filipino nationals in Metro Manila.

Asked if President Benigno Aquino has given an deadline for the neutralization of the five remaining kidnap-for-ransom gangs, Reyes said: "The order of the President was to do it fast, to do it quick. So we are working double-time."

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2003

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

METRO

FOUR DIGIT
7 5 6 4
Six-digit winners
5 UENTRES
8 1 7

MEGALOTTO 6/45
4 8 21 33 37 40

Editor Abelardo S. Villarama

Rise in crime blamed on PNP setup

Not enough cars, radios cripple NPD crime drive

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

CHRISTMAS is coming and the Northern Police District has drawn up a list of things it wants from Santa Claus—at least anyone in government who could grant this Christmas wish.

On top of that list are 83 patrol cars, communications equipment to help them respond faster and order in the three cities and one town in northern Metro Manila.

NPD director Marcelino Franco told the National Capital Region Police Office that he expects 60 cars from the Regional Special Action Unit in the district's new equipment would also be welcome.

According to Franco, the district headquarters only has two trucks for transportation and no patrol cars.

He added that some policemen had been forced to use their own motorcycles to patrol the district, while some patrolled on foot.

The NPD has jurisdiction over Caloocan City, Valenzuela City, Malabon City and Navotas.

The police all over the country have been preparing for the expected surge in criminality during the yuletide season, which is usually accompanied by the rise of unsafe practices.

However, the national police has been on continued alert due to a rash of high-profile crimes that included the kidnap-slaying of Danny Ty and the abduction of a 10-year-old pupil in Pasig, Manila.

Starting in three months, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the use of checkpoints all over the country to thwart more kidnappings and other crimes.

FOR SHABU
A police officer stands by 388 drums of ephedrine, a chemical used in the manufacture of shabu, which were seized by Customs officials at the Port of Manila. The shipment was consigned to Premier Sea and Air Cargo Movers Corp. officials in Manila. —AL GARCIA

By Leila Salaverria

A LOCAL police organization yesterday blamed the setup in the Philippine National Police for the rising crime rate in the country.

SPO2 Virgo Hilbanal, vice president of the Manila's Finest Brotherhood Association, Inc., said the PNP system was putting emphasis on getting promotions than performing in the field.

This has led police officers to run away from fighting crime to undergo schooling, where Villareal said they were made to take up more "repetitive" courses.

To be effective crime fighters, he said, policemen needed to have more field experience than classroom education.

Hilbanal said that when the police were still under the control of the mayors, rookie officers were told by their mentors lawyers to investigating crimes—something that is not possible under the current setup.

Thus, the neophyte investigator learned first-hand the skills of talking to witnesses, questioning suspects and gathering evidence irrefutable in a motion.

While officers back then were promoted mainly due to seniority, personnel and performance records have been the basis for promotions now.

Today, the SBSEM officer said, policemen were required to undergo numerous training programs, making them more competent in theory rather than in practice.

"Training is good, but there is no substitute for experience," he said. "There are policemen who have become colonels but have yet to solve a single crime."

The ABSCI also expressed support for efforts to remove the control over the police to local chief executives to stem rising crime. They called on former Manila police chief and now senator Ilocos Norte to help in that objective.

But Villareal added that they were not calling for the abolition of the PNP.

He said they believed that a national entity should supervise the police, but that local law enforcers should be under the mayor's control.

More undercover cops deployed on Quirino Ave.

ATTY. a spate of robberies and the killing of a college student on the corner of Quirino Avenue and South Superhighway, the Western Police District has beefed up security at the crime-prone area.

WPD director Chief Supt. Hermogenes Ebdane yesterday said that more plainclothes detectives or "undercover" have been deployed in the area in order to catch criminals by surprise.

"I believe the criminals would be caught faster if they don't know who'll be apprehending them," he said in a phone interview yesterday.

Ebdane also said that he had ordered more police officers to man the precinct in the area. He added that 12 more teams from the local Special Weapons and Tactics unit, would patrol Quirino Ave. on the lookout for drugs.

Earlier, a businesswoman from Makati, who last year PHP600,000 in a robbery at the corner of Quirino Ave. and the South Superhighway, told police that she received no help at all from the barangay captain of the nearby sham community where she sought his help to look for the men who stole her bag.

Two days after the businesswoman was robbed, college student Christopher Reyes, nephew of boxing expert Bicky Reyes, was waiting at the same corner for the red light to turn green when robbers tried to grab his cellular phone. The student resisted, prompting the culprits to shoot him dead. —Leila Salaverria

Make way for MMDA traffic preachers

By Margaux Ortiz

STREET education will take on a whole new meaning next week when the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority starts displaying "traffic education" in Metro Manila to remind pedestrians, motorists and even traffic enforcers of the basic traffic rules.

Like preachers, the specially outfitted vehicles with the remote-giving "lecturers" in them to be dubbed "Mr. Kon Konduktor" will be equipped with signage and sound tracks.

He said that on Monday three 12-man teams will be deployed on the streets.

Dino, MMDA Traffic Operations Center chairman.

Angel de Dios yesterday told the Inquirer over the telephone that the educators will be equipped with signs and sound tracks.

He said that on Monday three 12-man teams will be deployed on the streets.

Why Lacson can't win

ON TARGET
RAMON TULFO

THE BEST way to fight kidnap and holdup gangs is to field police officers in the strategic corners in the metropolis.

Of course, policemen should be equipped with two-way radios connected to their home base. Without communications facilities, uniformed police patrols are useless.

Do you know some police cars don't even have radios?

* * *

Uniformed cops stationed in strategic corners—what police call "choke points"—deter criminality if the cops have two-way radios connected to their home base and fellow cops.

Where a bank is holding up, for example, the robbers' getaway car or cars can be intercepted by police cops at the choke points. These cops will be alerted by their home base or fellow policemen on the bank holdup and the direction the robbers have taken.

Come to think of it, Metro Manila is a small place. There are very few major roads and streets to plug unless any a holdup or kidnap-napping takes place.

* * *

But our cops assigned to man choke points or check points should be trained in the science of interdiction. They should not harass robots or and move like in the enemy.

* * *

The members must adversely affected by Executive Order No. 1 by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) to run a loss, Pantilo "Pinoy" Lacson.

Ping Lacson has not hidden his intentions. He keeps blasting Senators Edgardo Angara and Teresa Aquino-Oreta for backing up the popular move to amend.

* * *

Sidelined, Ping is complaining like a woman scorned. Angry women is always.

* * *

Why can't Lacson accept the fact that he wasn't win the presidential race if it were held tomorrow?

* * *

My brother have many comrades in the country up with—like that nasty TV commercial where the assholes' thoughts are transformed into "Ping" prize with a Christmas jingle to boot—the of all logic behind in the surveys.

* * *

Immediately should tell him he's wasting a lot of money on those stupid TV commercials.

* * *

Why doesn't Ping Lacson duke with the masses and with the intelligent voters?

* * *

The answer is simple: He doesn't have the charisma.

* * *

He may have the looks, debate effectiveness, but people don't like him.

* * *

A woman once said it all up: "He looks cuisine."

Marikina youths stab boy, shoot cops

POLICE arrested four persons, including three minors, for stabbing and wounding Angel Cuevo, 16, in Marikina City Thursday night.

Also arrested, the six-year-old 17-year-old housemaids gave and a the knife, police said.

One of the youths arrested was Ulo Manuna, 19, of Barang, Marikina.

A fifth suspect, Jonathan de la Cruz, has been tagged as the one who stabbed the victim. De la Cruz is now at large, according to police.

Cuevo was on his way home when the teenagers insulted him and stabbed him on Libanan Street.

Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr., city police chief, said that when the cops were about to arrest the suspects, one of the boys opened fire on a policeman but missed. He said the minors would be turned over to the city's social welfare and development unit. —Jaime Piedad

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METRO BRIEFS

Killer at 16

CONVICT Wenceslao was 15 years old when he stabbed and killed his classmate during a brawl on the campus of the Antonio Maria Pamaran High School in Sta. Maria, Bulacan in 1995. Now 23, Wenceslao is facing jail time after another fight with the same classmate's brother, Ronnie Bautista, at Bautista Regional Trial Court branch 20, ended not the fight but Wenceslao's life. Wenceslao, apparently having learned his lesson, surrendered to the police. —Tarra Quismundo

Free after 7 years

MANILA Mayor Lito Atienza, Manila, will name two a few more after Bienvenido Regional Trial Court Branch 13 cleared him of drug charges. When sets Police District Director Avelino Mallabo allegedly for selling shabu in a buy-bust operation in 1996. But Mallabo, who pleaded not guilty to the crime, told the court that he was taking care of his children that night when the two were charged with the crime. Judge Roberto Diaz Jr. ruled that the prosecution failed to prove Mallabo's guilt beyond reasonable doubt. —Tarra Quismundo

Canossa-Lipa reunion

THE CANOSSA Academy Lipa is marking its first 50 years with a homecoming celebration. "Reflecting Progressing 2003," is the school's theme. For details, call Marilou Estrella at 756-0000 or (0917) 554-8015 or Ma. Natividad Dela Rama at (0917) 888-8135.

Bridget homecoming

ST. BRIDGET School will host its annual alumni homecoming, "A Family in Union, a Frontier Task . . . Counting Hands to our school's embrace," tomorrow, 1 p.m., at the school's auditorium. For inquiries, please call the at (02) 426-4029 or Marilou at (0917) 629-1242. You may also call SBS at 912-5498.

Xavier gathering

THE ALUMNI Association of Xavier School will hold its annual Grand Homecoming today at 7 p.m. at the Xavier High School Gym, Ortigas Avenue, Greenhills. Please call Xavier Alumni Office at 727-3209 and 726-6864.

GMA vows more teeth vs crime

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PASIG CITY — Hamang ko sa nasyon yesterday president, in a big business gathering, she would put more teeth into her administration's fight against kidnap-for-ransom and other heinous crimes.

She endorsed the implementation of a national identification card and approved the allocation of P300 million in marked money for kidnappers.

But the President asserted that summary executions or rub-outs as supported criminals have no room in her administration's anti-crime campaign.

"But let me speak about a scheme that we all recognize must be done. We speak about crime. We can fight crime by rub-outs but the same people that will do the rub-outs on the kidnappers will be the same people that will do a rub-out on a kidnapper 'Bubby' Dacer, will be the same people that will do a rub-out on their political enemies," she said, eliciting applause from businessmen, diplomats and legislators who attended the 20th Philippine Business Conference and Exhibition at the Manila Hotel.

Dacer, a public relations practitioner who was abducted and found dead with his driver, during the administration of former President Joseph Estrada.

"And therefore, it is going to be solved not by this double-edged sword but rather by immediate medium-term and long-term reforms," she said.

The President said that of more than 500 kidnapping cases in the last five years, 76 have resulted in convictions mostly during her administration.

But she said she wants stiffer crime-solving "more effective" way, which was why she appointed former Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes as her anti-kidnapping czar.

The President said that within one month of his appointment, Reyes netted 23 kidnap-for-ransom cases, including six most active kidnap-for-ransom groups.

His accomplishments, she noted, included the kidnappers of Coca-Cola executive Wilfredo Uy in a day after she was found dead, and the killing of a most notorious kidnap-for-ransom gang leader.

But to intensify the anti-kidnapping drive, the President said Reyes had been monitoring "movement" with selected Chinese organizations and communities designed to "tackle potential targets of kidnapping."

She said prominent and private schools in Manila and Quezon City were also briefed on possible kidnap-for-ransom activities.

She said she has authorized the setting up of additional police command posts or checkpoints and doubling up of police assistance centers to kidnap-prone areas.

"Mobile and fixed checkpoints shall be maintained, choke points going in Metro Manila will be monitored," she said.

She said heavily tinted vehicles would be checked and seized as enforcement laws to civilian vehicles would be challenged.

"Vehicles with questionable plate numbers will be questioned, special plates are not exempt from inspection," she said.

The President said members of kidnap-for-ransom gangs would be included in the government's most-wanted persons list, their pictures published in newspapers and posted in public places.

PNP wants PIB more

By Michael Lim

THE PHILIPPINE National Police is asking for additional P1 billion budget to hire 10,000 more police-men to fight and help in crimes of criminality in the country.

During the budget hearing in the Senate yesterday, Interior Secretary Joey Lina said the additional money would increase police visibility in the streets to avoid still petty and opportunistic crimes.

"But it's a question of where to get the funds. That's the problem, how to raise the funds," said Lina.

Like Erap, FPJ now butt of nasty jokes

and supporters are amused.

One joke tells of the result of a doctor's examination of Fu King's brain: "In the left side, there was nothing right, and in the right side, there was nothing left."

Another is a mock conversation among Estrada, Fox and US President George W. Bush.

"So what are the politicians in your country?" Bush asks the two friends.

"Mr. Bush, a lot, a lot, a lot, plus, plus, plus, plus, and more," Fox responds with pride, referring to the favored patients that Bush's brain surgeons have operated on.

Born in Estrada: "Nakuno mo, 101 face slit ang nasabihan ko kay Bush (Hey got it, my friend. That's also what I was going to tell him)."

And more:

Cartoon about the crime scene, Bush asks FPJ, "How is your parole system over there?"

FPJ: "Oh, we hang them every Christmas."

Estrada: "Pare, nauna Carmen ako ang sinpot ko. (Pare, got it again! That's also my answer)."

Like vitamins

But insulting Fox will actually result in more points for the man, according to his spokesperson Ilocos Governor Luis Singson.

"Don't they know that the more they hit him, the more he will be popular?" Singson yesterday told the Inquirer. "Grbe, clear of his alleged lack of qualifications are running him more sympathy from the public."

Some also said "the non-stop outing" at Fox would further boost his ratings. Pardoversoza, he said, Fox was taking the negative comments "like vitamins that will make him strong."

Stolz said Sto himself would not engage in black propaganda or name-calling during his campaign: "Expect him to be a presidential statesman at all times."

"We are not bothered by the issues politicians are throwing at him," Estrada said.

He added: "We view these insults as the last hurrah of the defeated. Politicians who are gasping up on him are acting like goons, like the Japanese soldiers we see in PH movies. They are helping his candidacy by making him appear as the oppressed underdog."

Coffee talk

From mobile phones, FPJ jokes have also spilled into coffee talk.

The common humor is that Boys has agreed to be Fox's running mate. But it's Bristol Boys, the actor, and not Raul Boys, the former senator and education secretary whom the latest survey has shown to be the front-runner in the presidential race.

But more than the nasty humor, the FPJ jokes appear to reflect a widespread uneasiness over the candidacy of the so-called newcomer in public service.

For example, his declaration Wednesday that he would seek the presidency plunged the peso in an all-time low of 55.85 to the US dollar the next day, and pulled share prices down nearly 3 percent.

On Thursday night TV, the show "Solusyon" posed this question: "Is the candidacy of FPJ in 2004 good news or bad news?"

The results of the non-scientific survey: good news, 21 percent of the votes; bad news, 78.50 percent. *With a report from Marichel R. Cruz*

BOSOM buddies Fernando Poe Jr. and Joseph Estrada have many things in common. Now they're objects of many raw jokes which, like the Boss, will only make Poe stronger and more popular.

Stand up to China, Taiwan urges RP

TAIPEI, Taiwan—Taiwan's president has urged the Philippines to stand up to China and has criticized Manila's foreign secretary for publicly ruling out visits by the Taiwanese vice president and foreign ministers.

The strong words came after Philippine Foreign Secretary Blas Ople who said Monday that his government's official relations with China would not allow it to welcome high-ranking Taiwanese officials.

Beijing says that self-ruled Taiwan belongs to China, and the Communist government tries to block the democratic island from having relations with other countries.

But Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian said Thursday that Ople's statements were based on "false rumors" and that Vice President Annette Lu and Foreign Minister Eugenio Chien had no plans to visit the Philippines.

"This is not a friendly action," Chen said about Ople's remarks in a meeting with Manuel Villar, the chairman of the Philippine Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Ople said last fall in a country's One China policy—which doesn't officially recognize Taiwan's government—would not allow Manila to welcome the Taiwanese officials.

But Chen said that the Philippines should act like a sovereign nation and stand up to China.

"The Philippines [is] a sovereign and independent nation, and should not use political thinking to handle trade relations with Taiwan ...under pressure from China," Chen said.

He awkwardly compared the Philippines to the United States, urging Washington (the exporter) China but still allows him to step over on his foreign trips and even receive awards. "If

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Manuel F. Generoso

Rizal, Bonifacio, Mabini, Lapu-Lapu are streets of San Francisco

From page A1

Cunlan took us around the SoMa neighborhood one afternoon, we deepened our appreciation of the struggle of many Filipinos who have chosen to live in America, to find their voice and create their Filipino identity.

It also built in us a sense of pride in what it means to be a Filipino in a foreign land. To be able to hold one's head high, to keep one's dignity, has been the struggle of many Filipinos who escaped to build a life in the United States.

"I didn't want to work in America or live in America. I saw myself as working for the Filipino people," says Cunlan.

In Manila, Cunlan was a university professor, academic historian and political activist for the last 17 years, he has worked as community leader, youth worker, newspaper columnist and service provider to the SoMa area which he calls home.

His work and involvement in the Filipino community in San Francisco has helped awaken the spirit of solidarity and oneness among the Pinoys who live in the SoMa area.

Centers of gravity

Cunlan, who has traveled extensively throughout Asia, Europe and the United States, observed that overseas Filipinos would establish their own centers of gravity, whether in train stations, parks or churches.

"Of all the communities outside the Philippines, Enclave of Manila in San Francisco is perhaps the closest in layout and character to the plaza complex in the towns and cities of the Philippines. SoMa has been the home of Filipinos in San Francisco since the 1920s, and it functions as a town plaza, publication and subsystem for the Filipino community in the Bay Area," Cunlan said.

Cunlan authored "SoMa Filipinas," published by Arkipelago Books last year, which outlines the rich history of the area and how it is an integral part of Filipino-American history in San Francisco.

Once an area that covers roughly 12 blocks, one finds numerous landmarks that would make the Filipino in town burst with pride. On one end of Mission Street is St. Patrick's Church, a Roman Catholic church where nine of 14 parishioners are Filipino. It is also the center of the Filipino ministry of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco.

First stopover

Walk further down and you will find numerous apartment buildings where the occupants are mostly Filipinos. SoMa, which Cunlan says has traditionally been the first stopover point of new immigrants into San Francisco, has blocks and blocks of apartment filled with mostly low-income families, seniors and immigrants.

On down two blocks toward Harrison Street and there you will find the Filipino Education Center—once the only Tagalog bilingual school in the USA—but which is now used primarily as an after-school activities center where the GALING SiDi (Gabay Lingap Batang Bata) program for the Filipino children who study at the Bessie Carmichael Elementary School is run.

A few blocks south and back toward Mission Street is the Mint Mall and Hall, a Filipino-owned building that serves as the residence of more than 500 Filipinos and a home to Arkipelago Books. Nearby is Kindlewild Studios, a label-theater studio for Filipino-American talents.

At the gateway to Mission Street also stands the Bayanihan House (formerly the Delta Hotel), which has been rehabilitated as housing for Filipino seniors.

Cunlan said that the first level of Bayanihan House will be the home site of the Bayanihan Community Center, a multi-purpose venue for family and community activities.

Cultural center

Cunlan and other Filipinos who have worked long and hard for all these landmark are most excited about the construction of the Filipino Cultural Center, which will be part of the largest development in San Francisco—the Bloomingdale Hotel, located a block away from St. Patrick's Church, also on Mission street. Though details have been a general decline in the population of Filipinos who reside in the city and county of San Francisco, Cunlan says that between 1990 and 2000 there was a 36-percent growth in the Filipino population in the SoMa area. "We may be (lower) in number here as opposed to Daly City but it is roughly a 3,000 strong population rich in culture and history," he says.

And in mid-December, Cunlan and his group of cohorts plan to light up the whole of Mission street with "parol" (Christmas lantern) all the way from the Bayanihan Center to St. Patrick's Church.

THE DIMASALANG Historic grocery was one of an apartment complex called the San Lorenzo Ruiz Center in SoMa.

FILAM HC Cunlan stands at the corner of Ruiz and Lapu Lapu streets.

IKAW AT ANG SSS

Questions & Answers on Social Security

The Importance of the SSS Certificate of Membership For Employer-Members

What is the SSS Certificate of Membership for Employer-Members?

The Certificate of Membership is a document issued to employer members as proof of their compliance with the registration requirement as provided under the Social Security Law. The certificate contains information about the employer's name, employer Social Security ID number and date of coverage.

How does an employer register his company with the SSS?

To register, the employer must fill out in two copies SS Forms R-1 (Employer Registration Card) & R-1A (Employment Report) containing the accomplished form with the needed supporting documents. These forms are available at SSS branches.

What are the requirements for registration?

The accomplished SS Forms R-1 (Employer Registration) and R-1A (Employment Report) must be submitted with supporting documents based on the company's legal personality. The original copies must be presented to the SSS for authentication purposes.

Partnership - A copy of Partnership
Corporation - Articles of Incorporation
Cooperative - Certificate of Registration issued by Cooperative Development Authority (CDA)
Non-stock/Non-profit Corporation - SEC Registration Certificate of Affiliation
Single Proprietorship - none

After obtaining the certificate of membership, what must the employer do with it?

The employer must frame and display the Certificate of Membership in a place most convenient for public notice in their respective offices, factories, stores, compounds, establishments, or any other places of business or occupation, as the case may be.

The certificate should be enclosed in a glass frame or under protective device.

What are the advantages of registering one's business or company with the SSS?

In registering one's business or company with the SSS, the employer assures his employees of social security protection and promotes industrial peace in the workplace. Registration with the SSS ensures peace of mind to the employees knowing that the employer is looking after their welfare and that they are adequately protected in times of contingencies. More importantly, the employer is abiding with the SS Law.

What happens if an employer fails to register his company with the SSS?

Under Sec. 28 (a) of RA 8282 or the Social Security Act of 1997, an employer who fails or refuses to register employees or himself, in case of the covered self-employed shall be punished by a fine of not less than Five thousand pesos (P5,000) nor more than Twenty thousand pesos (P20,000), and imprisonment for not less than six (6) years and one (1) day nor more than twelve (12) years.

To report, for SSS clearance, visit the SSS office nearest you. For more information call 924-0450 or 920-6600 or e-mail at member_mail@sss.gov.ph.

Kabilhan ka sa kaibo!

File for 924-0450 or 920-6600 or Bantay Kaibigan Dept., Social Security System, East Avenue, Quezon City

Name: _____ Inquiry: _____ Suggestion: _____
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SSS ABOUT

'Tuko' interrupts GMA talk in Lucena

To main page A1

about suspected child executives.

The lucky culprit? A "gecko" (tukli) lizard, making its home on the ceiling of the covered gymnasium of the Sacred Heart College in this city.

Just as President Macapagal-Arroyo was to deliver the "good news" about the economy to some 3,000 students and teachers late Thursday afternoon, a series of "to-kit" sounds emanated from behind the stage.

As boisterous laughter started to fill the gym, the President, who was already at the podium, stopped. "What's that?" asked Ms Macapagal-Arroyo, wearing a wide smile, asked her equally amused companions seated behind her, including interior Secretary Joey Lina, Agriculture Secretary Domeldora Quezon Representative Rafael Nantes and Lucena's Pesudan and school officials.

After some 30 seconds when the commotion had died down, Ms Macapagal told her audience she was used to hearing the same sounds in her house in La Vista, Quezon City, because there was a tukli pet lizard behind it.

One student had a "politically naughty" reaction. "Politicians have been associated with this creature, especially for those who stubbornly cling to power as in the saying 'kapit-tuko,'" the student told the Inquirer.

But Asian and Philippine folklore looks on the gecko differently. It is said that a gecko's sounds could mean "good luck and prosperity" in different parts of the world, gecko lizards in the house are considered good luck.

The "tukli" is often jocularly described as the most pious of lizards, because it usually comes out when dusk sets in and punctuates the praying of the Angelus.

During the open forum, three selected college students seated easy questions to the President, ranging from perceived graft and corruption in her government, the brain drain and state-sponsored scholarships, which the President answered easily.

Ms Macapagal also highlighted the third-quarter growth of the country's gross domestic product, up by 4.4 percent, and the gross national product, up by 3.9 percent.

Peso plunges ...

Palace says GMA leader of 'real world'

Front page A1

trading hit an intra-day low of P55.74 before slightly recovering at the close of trading, which the market described as "relatively quiet and uneventful" compared to Wednesday's frenzied trading of dollars on expectations the peso would plumb new depths.

On Wednesday, the peso sank to a historic low of P55.65, eclipsing the P55.75 record low registered on Jan. 17, 2001 at the height of Estrada-ple Beauty II, a day after populist actor Fernando Poe Jr. announced his presidential bid.

FPJ factor

Many businessmen believe Poe, a high school dropout who has no political experience, is not capable of handling the presidency.

Poe's dense ties with deposed President Joseph Estrada, also an actor, has also stoked fears of a repeat of Estrada's ill-fated term, which was cut short by a mass revolt following charges of graft in 2000.

But the opposition blamed Malacañang for the peso slide, saying it had "mega-mismanaged" the free fall of the currency and Poe's political rise figured in the equation.

Malacañang, however, denied that it was pinning the blame for the peso's continued fall on Poe's decision to run in next year's elections.

In an interview with DZMM radio, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said action of anyone for, not contributed to the peso's fall such as the Dakila-led rumbling and the Poe announcement. He said businessmen react to a lot of factors and not just one reason.

A Treasury official said the peso would continue in losing at the P55.70 level next week but with a bias to further depreciation. "The market is looking at the P56 level, particularly since politicians file their candidacies on Dec. 15," the official added.

The peso has shed 3.6 percent of its value since the start of the year, making it the biggest loser among Asian currencies.

Rare platforms

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura urged *new presidential candidates to announce their* economic platforms to calm investor jitters.

He also brushed off allegations that the BSP had deliberately allowed the peso to fall to obtain the weak exchange rate that the government has been using to woo investors to boost next year's elections was largely blamed for the currency's collapse.

Recognized as one of the world's best central bankers, Buenaventura took exception to such allegations, saying he would never allow himself to be used to a political end.

An appointee of Estrada, the BSP chief has been widely regarded even by the current administration.

BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said that there had been slight response demand from the oil and power companies.

"The market has remained cautious given the political developments. But we have been seeing some inflow from OFWs as well as portfolio investors," said Tetangco.

Overseas workers are expected to send home $7.7 billion this year, of which $5.39 billion has been remitted as of September.

Moody's warning

Former Finance Secretary Jose Pardo yesterday blamed the peso's weakness on the warning of Moody's Investors Service that it may downgrade the country's credit rating due to political uncertainties.

"I believe it is more of Moody's warning and the regional currencies rather than FPJ as the reason for the peso's drop," said Pardo, who is being *tapped by FPJ as one of his economic advisers.*

Buenaventura said there was no need yet for the BSP to raise its overnight policy rates or banks' reserve requirement to ease pressure on the peso. "There is no need to do anything yet," said the BSP chief.

Shares ended marginally lower Friday as political concerns continued to weigh on market sentiment ahead of next year's elections, traders said.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index ended down 5.30 points, or 0.4 percent, at 1,313.47 in its lowest close in seven weeks. The index lost 3.9 percent Thursday.

Blue chip Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. led the market decline and accounted for a fourth of total turnover. PLDT lost P6.or4701.

Despite apprehensions linked to next year's polls, some bargain hunters still nibbled on select stocks, given favorable corporate earnings and growth prospects.

Traders said there was strong support at the 1,300 psychological level, and this signals the market could return to its upward trend soon.

"The reaction yesterday [to the political developments] was overdone," said Oliver Plana, head of sales at Asiasec Equities Inc.

Economic growth

"Probably the announcement of the economic growth numbers, which were better than expected, worked to cushion the market's decline," he said.

The government said the gross domestic product grew 4.4 percent in the third quarter, mainly on account of high agriculture sector growth.

A central bank survey of businessmen showed their *new optimism of sustained eco*nomic expansion in the fourth quarter and first quarter of 2004 as election-related spending boosts growth.

Share prices are expected to move listlessly next week, dealers said. Investors would like, by any of the deadline to await further developments, they added.

"They may always create uncertainty," said Bernard Mascuñana of Prudential Global Equities Inc. He added that the Peso would likely trade within narrow range of between 1,280 and 1,300. With AP, Reuters, AFP reports

Not Roco but Poe

Two administration officials counted Roco out, saying it was Poe who would be the President's chance rival.

Strategy Secretary Eller Ermita said the Pulse Asia survey showed that Roco's ratings had remained steady, but those of Mr. Macapagal had improved.

Ermita said the 2004 elections would be a "showdown" between Mr. Macapagal and Poe.

Another Palace official, who did not want to be named, shred the same assessment.

"The [Roco] may be popular in surveys, but the reality of politics is that the race will be between the administration and the strongest opposition candidate," the official said.

He said that as far as political affiliation was concerned, Poe was "neither here nor there."

The official said the President would lean for because it would be "popularity versus performance, experience and wisdom."

"The President will definitely have the edge there," he said, adding that Poe was an "unknown quantity," not having been to any public post.

"If Dumlaomond want continuity and help for the economy to recover, who else can give it to them?" the official said.

He admitted that the administration was careful not to attack Poe in order not to make him an underdog.

"His candidacy could be explosive so why make him even stronger?" the official said.

Protest rally

Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo thinks the President will emerge winner.

"I'm confident that the people will know how to judge the quality, experience, vision and the ability to make the vision become real," he said.

But for all that, the GMA will mount a protest rally against Mr. Macapagal on Sunday at the Liwasang Bonifacio to mark the 144th birth anniversary of the hero Andres Bonifacio.

"We vow to do everything we can to back [the President's] leadership and frustrate her political ambitions," Lubag said. "We have had enough of her corrupt, repressive and anti-worker policies. We want her out of Malacañang as soon as possible."

The KMU said the local unemployment level had reached 6.2 million, up from 3.4 million in 2000. It said the state of joblessness in the country was among the worst in Asia.

Lubag said the overseas Filipino workers' sending money to their families were what was saving the government.

"The growing Gross National Product is due to remittances sent by millions of OFWs... But despite this, they suffer dangerous, low-paid and up-pulling conditions," he said.

But the Department of Labor and Employment said there were more than 8,000 job vacancies in various occupations, industries and the government.

The DOLE-directed job fourteen in the Public Employment Service Office in their city or municipality.

New coalition vs GMA

Around half a million workers belonging in more than 30 labor groups, including the decades-old National Federation of Labor Unions, yesterday formed a new coalition against trade liberalization and globalization and, by extension, the President.

Former Sen. Pepe Diokno, a key leader in the Coalition of Filipino Consumers, said the newly formed Kongreso ng Pagkakaisa ng Manggagawa ng Pilipinas (KPMP) was not inclined to become a personalities.

But when asked if the new coalition would range itself against the President, Dodo Dino said: "Definitely. She is the author of trade liberalization and globalization in the country."

In the mid-1980s, the then Sen. Macapagal-Arroyo actively worked for the Philippines' inclusion in the World Trade Organization and for ratification of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Organized workers have been pressuring the country's participation in the WTO-GATT because of the adverse effects on local industries that cannot keep up with competition from cheap imported goods.

The WORLD

Edna Lawrence B. Guerra

China-Taiwan crisis over bill averted

BEIJING—China's state media said Friday the passage of a "watered down" bill on referendums in Taiwan was a "great defeat" for the island's president, Chen Shui-bian, while analysts said a pending crisis had been postponed.

At the same time, at least two official newspapers warned the passing of the legislation—which would allow for a vote on sovereignty under certain worst case circumstances—would have major impact on Beijing-Taipei relations.

The government had no immediate official reaction, but analysts said Beijing would likely accept the situation ahead of a visit to the United States by Premier Wen Jiabao next month.

"It will not intensify tension," said China watcher Joseph Cheng from City University of Hong Kong.

"For the moment, I think China will definitely accept the situation and avoid any open pressure on Taiwan.

"Premier Wen Jiabao will certainly raise the issue and hope that the United States will exercise some pressure on Taiwan to not go hostile."

The bill passed in the parliament Thursday makes possible referendums on contentious issues such as its dependence and changes in Taiwan's name, but also sets hurdles that would make such changes hard to achieve in practice.

A state-backed glossy outlining peaceful reunification between mainland China and Taiwan over the last decade described the bill as "extremely irresponsible."

"The extremely irresponsible moves, which goes against the fundamental interests of Taiwanese people, will be finally cast aside by the public," the China Daily quoted Wang Jiulin, secretary general of the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification, as saying.

Wang said it would further underscore social stability and economic development in Taiwan, while China considers part of its territory exist though the island broke away from mainland rule in 1949.

In the run up to the vote in parliament, China repeatedly re-stated its long-standing policy that it would use military force to prevent the island moving toward independence.

The China Daily in a front-page report, referred to the bill as "watered down", reiterating the imminent danger of Taiwan independence but said it could still be "a source of concentration."

"A handful of die-hard separatist members may still take advantage of the legal mechanism to provoke the mainland and trigger tension in bilateral relations," Lin Gaoshou, director of the Taiwan Research Institute at Xiamen University was quoted as saying.

The Global Times in prospective legislation as a failure for Chen.

"Independence referendum of Chen this time 'fails,'" said its headline.

"For the team of Chen-Annette, this is a great defeat. But the proposal of defensive referendum has been voted and this will create an unpredictable impact on cross-Straits relations," it said.

The bill has a clause that says a "defensive referendum" on Taiwanese sovereignty is permitted in the event of an attack from China. AFP

Dalai Lama eager to talk with Beijing over Tibet

THE EXILED Dalai Lama meets prior to an interview in Rome, Nov. 27. AP

ROME—The Dalai Lama said on Thursday he was extremely eager to negotiate with China about the government of Tibet and was optimistic about the outcome even though Beijing remained skeptical.

The exiled spiritual leader of Tibet said he was keen to send new delegations to Beijing after China hosted two trips in 14 months by his personal envoys in an apparent thawing of ties.

"We are very, very eager to continue this process a third time, a fourth time, a fifth time and so on until we reach meaningful discussions and understanding," the Dalai Lama said in a joint interview with Reuters and another news agency.

"I have confidence that I can help the Chinese government in order to achieve genuine stability and unity."

The witnesses asked Monday said face-to-face contacts would improve relations with Beijing. "So I am optimistic, although at this moment the Chinese government is always suspicious."

Asked if he would consider meeting Chinese President Hu Jintao and whether he thought it could happen one day, he said: "It's possible."

Chinese troops imposed Communist rule on Tibet in 1950 and the Dalai Lama fled nine years later after a failed uprising against them. China claims Tibet as part of its territory and accuses the 68-year leader of separatist activities.

The 66-year-old, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, reaffirmed his long-standing position that he is not seeking independence but greater autonomy for the "Land of Snows."

Beijing objects to foreign governments talking to him. It protested in September when President George W. Bush hosted him in Washington, and the same month Hanna Suchocka first visiting for fear of damaging ties with China.

During his three-day visit to Rome, he has met Pope John Paul II, Italian parliamentarians, a junior minister at the foreign ministry and trade union leaders. Its meeting has yet been planned with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

Asked when and under what conditions he would return to Tibet, the Dalai Lama said: "At least as there is some indication that I will be useful inside Tibet. I am ready to go." Reuters

Jacko's alleged sexual abuse victim 'very sick'

JACKSON

LOS ANGELES—A custody club lawyer who says he introduced Michael Jackson to the cancer-stricken boy he is accused of molesting said the child is in such poor health that his remaining kidney is failing.

Julie Miranda, lawyer of The Laugh Factory in West Hollywood, said Thursday he brought Jackson and the child together about two years ago—soon after doctors gave the boy three weeks to live. He said the boy improved as interest in meeting Jackson and Miranda made "a few phone calls."

"The kid is not doing very good," Miranda said at a Thanksgiving dinner for the homeless that he holds at the club each year.

Miranda said doctors removed a large tumor from the boy's stomach some time ago, and at the same time took out one of his kidneys and spleen. He said the boy's remaining kidney is failing, and that he needs a transplant.

Miranda said he saw the boy vomit at the week. He said the boy was being treated at home, not a hospital, but was getting dialysis treatment.

It was unclear what effect the boy's condition could have on the case against Jackson. Miranda said he said the boy had not discussed Jackson.

Jackson surrendered last week after an arrest warrant alleged he committed lewd or lascivious acts with a child under 14. He was released on $3 million bail; authorities say they expect to file formal charges sometime after Dec. 15.

Jackson's attorney Mark Geragos said this week that the accusations are motivated by money and are untrue.

Miranda said he met the boy at a camp where stars including Adam Sandler and Chris Tucker teach underprivileged children about celebrity. He said he contacted Jackson's people and asked that Jackson watch a seven-year-old dress the boy's make-a-wish efforts to help him.

He said he asked for the pop singer "call him, cheer him up."

Miranda said that in the past, celebrities have given blood for the boy and held benefits to help pay his medical bills.

Vivian Berkowitz, Jackson's spokesperson, declined to comment on Miranda's account but said he hoped the boy's condition would improve.

"I think it goes without saying that we all hope he recovers well and that everybody's heartfelt wish is for him to be healthy," Berkowitz said.

The boy's mother has an online photo-sharing site and said he fantasized his romance. The Associated Press does not identify alleged victims of sexual abuse. AP

Saudi cops' raid yields truck carrying 1 ton of explosives

RIYADH—Saudi Arabia's security forces found a pick-up truck packed with more than a ton of explosives when they raided a militant cell planned to launch a "terrorist operation" in Riyadh, officials said on Thursday.

State television showed footage of the truck, seized after a clash on Tuesday in which two militants and a police officer were killed. Also seized were 1,297 kg of explosives, detonators and explosives-laden vests, it said.

Officials say Tuesday's raid by security forces thwarted an imminent attack during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, less than three weeks after suspected al-Qaida bombers killed at least 18 people in a residential area east of the Saudi capital.

An interior ministry source said the truck had 1,297 kg of explosives, an anti-car guard, explosives in the back when it was seized. A further 1,177 kg of explosives was found nearby, along with more than a thousand rounds of ammunition.

Television footage showed a pick-up truck, painted dark brown, and marked with military insignia. Authorities also showed what they said were forged car plates of state security agencies, and military uniforms.

Witnesses have said the attackers who struck on Nov. 9 at the Malaysia compound on Riyadh's eastern fringe escaped the checkpoint because their vehicle had military markings.

The two men killed on Tuesday were Abdul-Mohsen Abdul-Aziz al-Muhanna and Hamad Mohammed Dakhil al-Sultane, the interior ministry said.

Muhanna was most wanted as he is believed to be security forces' brain behind a car while Sultane bombs himself up with a hand grenade, it said. Muhanna's corpse and Sultane's mangled remains were also shown on television.

Security forces were still hunting down an unspecified number of militants who escaped, the ministry said.

Saudi rebels, the birthplace of Islam, have stepped up attacks on suspected Muslim militant cleric Mary, whose triple suicide bombings in Riyadh killed 35 people. It says Saudi forces Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network is trying to topple the royal family which rules the world's biggest oil exporter.

Washington's behind Tuesday's clash as the fourth success by security forces this year in foiling planned attacks. Reuters

AAZAMGARH: Muslim border village women carry firewood over their heads as a truce between India and Pakistan holds, at Phulera, 75 km west of Srinagar, Nov. 25. Long accustomed to running for cover, the villagers now widely relaxed on Thursday as they gunned their animals and trudged wheat and hay by fields. AP/PTI

100 nations set to agree on unexploded arms pact

GENEVA—Hopes rose on Thursday that nearly 100 nations, including the United States, would agree on a global treaty requiring countries to clear millions of unexploded weapons left by wars to remember their victims.

The 92 signatories to the Unit of Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons were expected to approve by Friday a binding protocol on so-called Explosive Remnants of War, after two years of study and 12 months of negotiations.

"It is the first international treaty which requires to clear all unexploded weapons that pose a threat to civilians when the war is over," said India's ambassador for disarmament, Rakesh Sood, who is presiding over the talks.

"With this protocol, states will have a responsibility to clean up after its each departure. It will no longer be possible for parties to a conflict to just walk away," he said a news conference in Geneva.

The protocol will enter into force once it is ratified by at least 20 countries. Sood explained, adding that this would mark the first legally binding treaty on disarmament adopted at the United Nations since the anti-personnel land-mines treaty of 1997.

"It's a divine surprise," said one Western diplomat, noting that Washington had earlier opposed the idea of a compulsory treaty.

The protocol may unjustly still have to clear unexploded weapons from foreign territories they were to a result of war. AFP

India PM takes Kashmir ceasefire a step further

NEW DELHI—In a further boost for South Asian peace hopes, India's prime minister said he hoped to meet his Pakistani counterpart in January in a ceasefire between the two countries' armies in Kashmir was framed to hold for a third day Friday.

Despite the truce, however, violence again struck Indian Kashmir, with police saying two Islamic militancy were gunned down in Anantnag. Friends denied Friday as they tried to cross from the Pakistan-run part of Kashmir.

On the outskirts of the summer capital Srinagar, some 60km, suspected Muslim militants overnight shot dead a former colleague and injured an elderly Hindu personnel in an ambush, police spokesperson said.

The killings brought the death toll over the last 24 hours to nine, including six rebels killed on Thursday, underscoring the fragility of the peace process, which New Delhi says it dependent on the end to the insurgency.

The two sides declared a surprise ceasefire in Kashmir on Tuesday, which officials said has been understood.

Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh (left) and pro-Pakistani rebels leave said there will be no truce inside Indian Kashmir, where an anti-Indian rebellion has raged since 1989 at a cost of tens of thousands of lives.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who extended a "hand of friendship" to Pakistan on April 18, said he is keen to meet his Pakistani counterpart Zulmifikar Ali Bhutto on the sidelines of a South Asian summit in Islamabad in January.

"My program of going to Pakistan is being prepared and I will meet everyone there... I will be happy if Musab meets me," Vajpayee told reporters in the northern Indian town of Ludhiana late Thursday.

Singh was to visit Islamabad for a Jan. 4 to 6 summit of the seven-member South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It was an important meeting among the prime ministers.

India's government had earlier said it would not talk to Pakistani leaders until the flow of rebels from the Pakistani zone of India to the Indian side was halted.

Jaswant and Vajpayee spoke to each other by telephone in April soon after Vajpayee made his move to break a military stand-off sparked by an attack on Indian parliament in December 2001, which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based militants. AFP

WORLD BRIEFS

130 dead in DR Congo boat capsizing

KINSHASA—At least 130 people drowned when the capsizing of an overcrowded boat in Congo's river to Lake Mantombele in northern Democratic Republic of Congo. The UN peacekeeping relief in town said Thursday. Twenty-three people were rescued from the ordeal. Jim Tuna Mwa (Thank God), which had left Mantombele with 23 tons of manufactures. The boat's owner said earlier. The ship that 120 people died in the disaster Tuesday night on Lake Mantombele, which lies in Kinshasa's province around 600 km northeast of the capital, Kinshasa. AFP

Sharon takes tough line

TEL AVIV—Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon took a tough line Thursday ahead of the unveiling of an unofficial peace plan, saying he will speed up the building of the controversial West Bank barrier and threatening the Palestinians with unilateral steps. In the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army, which backs a Monday release of short-dead three-year-old Palestinian from the same family who were wounded in celebrations marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. In a speech to members of the Israeli press in Tel Aviv, Sharon accused Palestinians prime minister Ahmed Qurei of failing to respect the internationally backed roadmap to peace blueprint and the subsequent unilateral measures. AFP

Thai man stuck with his German husband

BERLIN—A Thai man who married and is a woman to marry German men has failed to get the marriage annulled, and is now stuck with his husband. A German court dismissed the Thai's request for an annulment because same-sex marriages are not recognized in Germany, and therefore cannot be annulled. "I don't know why they got married, whether it was love or the reason for residence permit," said Silvia Oberhöfer, a spokesperson for the court in the western town of Celle. The 43-year-old Thai married the man in Denmark under a bilateral accord in 1998 and now lives in Germany. Reuters

Nobel Peace Prize winners' summit

ROME—Some 20 Nobel Peace Prize laureates, including Mikhail Gorbachev and the Dalai Lama, are due today to attend the fourth Nobel peace summit for three days of debate on these ordinary or today's world. The organizers Mikhail Gorbachev, the Dalai Lama, Shimon Peres, Lech Walesa, Rigoberta Menchu, 20 Nobel prize and the president of Italy, "is an honor to the five organizers," said. Gathering of their summit in Rome in city hall will for the second time of legal the Ideo Per Pace (Ideas) a prize given each year to an individual or organization in recognition of outstanding humanitarian activities. Before us for Bulletin Bumper and Bin-dam Hall's year. This year it is due to go to football team of Italian players, both famous and unknown, who have inherited more than 100 million euros for humanitarian programs over 22 years, a dollar-for-euro basis. The fourth of the kind, will focus on children's rights, the economy and violence. It will last three days and be attended by fellow President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. AFP

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2003 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER A 19

SPORTS

Edna Rodriguez S. Hernandez
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

Monkey is off Tigers' back

HAVING driven Talk 'N Text into a 2-0 hole again, Coca-Cola this time made sure the All Filipino champ would stay there for good.

The Coke Tigers held the TNT Phone Pals to only eight points in the second quarter and went on to post a runaway 101-81 victory and complete a three-game sweep of their semifinal series in the Samsung PBA Reinforced Conference at the Cuneta Astrodome.

"At least we got that monkey off our backs," said Jeffrey Cariaso, referring to Coca-Cola's dubious distinction as the first team to lose a best-of-seven championship series after winning the first two games.

That Coke semifinal foe reminded the Phone Pals-with the All Filipino crown just in their second four encounters since Season 8-2 start in the playoffs.

"We didn't expect that we could pull off a sweep, not against Talk 'N Text," added Cariaso, who fired 16 points to match the

(CONTINUED ON P. 2)

Shell coach steps down

MPFI to change to the Shell Turbochargers' continuing misfortunes, coach Perry Ronquillo yesterday offered himself as a solution. This party, amiable Shell team mentor tendered his resignation.

Ronquillo, who signed a three-year contract with the Turbochargers in 2001, will bow out after it's his pact, but he said he would name it if Shell manage-

ment reconsiders his resignation.

"We still evaluate the team and see what we can do after coach Perry offered his resignation," Shell team spokesman Bobby Carapi said the buyouts.

Carapi said Ronquillo, who steered the Turbochargers to the 1999 All Filipino title over heavily-favored Sandoing Orioles the team to the team's next coach yesterday.

JEFFERY TNT guard Jimmy Alapag looks for a teammate while in his grasp.

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Pacers trip Knicks

INDIANAPOLIS—Jermaine O'Neal had 27 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Indiana Pacers to their seventh consecutive win, a 93-70 decision over the New York Knicks in NBA play Thursday.

Ron Artest added 21 points for the Pacers, who have the best record in the NBA at 13-2.

Indiana broke open a tight game with an 18-2 run in the third quarter and held the Knickerbockers scoreless for 7:26 points.

The Pacers have the best defensive record in the NBA, as they've held their opponents to just 81.4 points per game coming into Thursday's tilt.

Indiana has held its opponents to under 79 points in eight of the last nine games.

Allan Houston added 11 points for the Pacers.

Kurt Thomas led New York with 12 points and nine rebounds, as the Knicks lost for the first time in four games despite going 30-for-33 from the free throw line.

Other results: Nets Jersey 102, LA Clippers 96; Indiana 93, New York 70;Boston's

PACERS' Kenny Anderson drives against Knicks' Kurt Thomas.

Monkey . . .

output of import Arizona McClay.

The Tigers, who are in the Finals for the fourth straight tournament, will meet the San Miguel Beermen in a best-of-seven series for the title.

SMB also completed a 2-0 sweep of the Sta. Lucia Realtors, 120-96, later in the night.

McClay shot 25 points alone in the first half, nine in the second period, as the Tigers outscored the Phone Pals, 19-8, to build a 42-35 halftime lead.

Then Rudy Hatfield unloaded 14 points in the third quarter as the Tigers broke the game wide open with a 26-21 blitz for a 76-53 advantage.

Jimmy Alapag, looking like a hockey goalie while playing with a mask to protect his injured nose, contributed 13, behind Harvey Carey's 17.

Scores:

First Game:

ADMU (Hill 10)—McClay 25, Arnaiz 15, Ildefonso 13, Alapag 13, Buenafe 7, Villamin 6, Mercado 5, Mamaril 2, Magsanoc 2, Acosta 2, Lucero 2, Antonio 0.

FEU (Hatfield 14)—Hatfield 14, Yadao 10, Cruz 7, Alapag 6, Parks 6, Bolano 5, Pua 5, Gamboa 2, Vitan 0, Mendoza 0.

Quarters: 20-20, 42-35, 76-53, 101-89.

Second Game:

UST (Ravena 20)—Ravena 20, Johnson 20, Yee 18, Mallonga 12, Mendoza 12, Bolanos 6, Dillard 4, Dizon 3, Victoria 3, Quintana 2.

STA. LUCIA (Ong 18)—Lopez 19, Ayala 13, Gonzalez 11, Mendoza 11, Cortez 11, Balagtas 7, Antonio 6, Velasco 5.

Quarters: 28-23, 52-40, 80-72, 96-96.

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Bathers: NOLI ESTRELLADO, HENRY PRIMALION & GERARD AMPIL
Painting: PATRICK ANTONIO

"NASA RESULTA ANG PRUWEBA"

ALAGANG SAGUPAAN... LAMANG SA PANALO!

ISSN 0115-2542 INQUIRER VOL. XXVI, NO. 334

OPINION

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Blank check

EDITORIAL

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of the candidacy of actor Fernando Poe Jr. for the presidency on Wednesday has sent powerful shock waves to the markets. The day following the announcement, the peso sank to a new trading low of P55.65 to the US dollar, breaching the all-time record of P55.75 at the height of the impeachment crisis during the time of President Joseph Estrada in January 2001. The peso plunge occurred as the stock market as stocks fell to their lowest in seven weeks. The main index dropped 1.86 percent or 24.94 points to 1,319.42 points, the lowest since October.

The new shock followed the resignation of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, stealing the peso trading. The peso's fall showed the volatility of the markets in response to events that create political and economic uncertainties.

The Poe announcement came as the international credit-rating firm Moody's Investors Service announced that it may downgrade the country's debt ratings in the face of heightened uncertainties associated with the May 2004 elections. There is no doubt that Poe's candidacy was the biggest single political event that rocked the markets, which have already been badly shaken by a series of destabilization since the failed July 27 military mutiny.

With their shiny reaction to Poe's presidential bid, the markets are sending a blunt message that they are concerned over his still undisclosed economic policies and his competence to manage the economy. Investors and risk analysts are bothered that Poe might repeat the mismanagement of the economy by the corruption-plagued administration of the disgraced President Estrada, who like Poe, had meager educational credentials to run the government competently.

The markets consider Poe a risk that makes the business community uncertain, given his lack of experience in public affairs and his evasiveness in giving an idea of his economic programs. This concern was expressed by the Association of Securities Analysts of the Philippines, which derided the opposition for "pushing for a candidate who is more popular than credible." It warned that "investors will see the Philippine economy as a risk because we want a leader who is popular rather than experienced in handling state affairs."

Camacho shared this concern and put it more bluntly: "His lack of experience and expertise, especially in economy, worries some people. That is why it is important for the electorate to make an informed decision in 2004."

The reaction of the Poe camp to the concerns of the business community is that these were coming from "elitists." But this response only reflects the shallowness of the minds surrounding the actor. Businessmen prosper or are ruined by the political environment in which they operate. Businesses are the engines of growth and economic dynamism. To be dismissive about their concerns reflects a lack of understanding on the part of Poe's supporters of the dynamic relationship between politics and business. At the very start of the launch of his presidential bid, Poe is already exhibiting lack of depth and this does not inspire confidence in his ability to run the government.

Poe at the very start heightened anxieties over his credentials to manage the economy by evading questions about his economic policies, the most important questions to the business community. He responded with a platitude, which suggested he was operating from a vacuum. He said that in time he would disclose his economic team and policies.

The first statement he blurted out was neither helpful nor reassuring. "I am sincere, dedicated and I love my country," he said. If this is what Poe understands by policy, then we can expect more empty motherhood pronouncements from him in the weeks to come.

The Filipino people have the right to demand more substance from anyone who wants to be their president. For it, in effect, asking the Filipino people to sign a blank check by electing him as filled trust, without even giving them an inkling of what he intends to do as president. This is what swindlers do when they rob you of hard-earned money.

Whether or not he will be able to organize soon an economic team and to name his advisers is no assurance of his competence. The members of the team may give a clue to their economic orientation. But Estrada recruited 40 advisers, and each adviser from his unofficial "midnight" advisers who were his drinking buddies. Even if Poe recruits 100 advisers, the question that remains to be asked is, Will he understand what they whisper into his ears?

Grammar unbecoming

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

Time, the Universal nonsuiteuses are facing the traditional accusation of "conduct unbecoming as an officer and a gentleman," without the "of." If they are indicted for "conduct unbecoming of an officer and a gentleman," they should move to dismiss the charge for faulty grammar.

Another common error of the Supreme Court is the dangling participle. The usual example is "At the age of five, his father died." The intended meaning is that the boy was five when his father died, but that is not what the sentence says. As constructed, it suggests that it is the father who died when he was only five.

To avoid confusion, say, "When the boy was five, his father died." Otherwise, the boy's father would be dead at only five, perhaps for being unnaturally prolific.

Often enough, the Court will dispose as follows: "Wherefore, finding no error in the appealed decision, the same is hereby affirmed in toto." Correct? Wrong. As worded, the ruling is saying that the appealed decision has found nothing wrong with it and is therefore affirming itself.

It is correct that legal absurdity, the ungrammatical sentence should be recast thus: "Wherefore, finding no error in the appealed decision, we hereby affirm it (or 'the same' if you like the euphemism)." or toto."

It is the court that finds no error in the appealed decision and is therefore affirming it completely.

My use of the word "eunuchs" was intended to point to another failing of the Court: its employment of high-sounding words to render the reader unfit or credulous. A "eunuch" is a humane term of some position that answers to me like ghosts getting on mind. "Prostitute" is another offender. "Again extricate" is also a relief among many others.

And I can't understand why they can't simply say that the petition has merit instead of habitually proclaiming that it is "impressed with merit." Does that make their prose unforgettable? Perhaps they want to imitate the inimitable Justice Leopoldo Bautista, who once wrote in a colorful separate opinion:

"The rules governing the phenomena of summons and dililation, of permissibility and intrinsic significance, of non-admission and waiver, disinclusion, of development and reproduction, like all laws of life, are uniform and universal." (There is more but not enough space for the entire dissertation.)

A judicial decision is not intended only for lawyers and judges with their utterances and hermeneutics that they themselves sometimes find hard to decipher. I remember one occasion when I confessed that I could not understand a colleague's position and to my surprise the author of the Court conceived.

Judges, and especially justices, write not only for the counsel but also for the parties and the general public who are mostly laymen. In a democracy they have the right to demand to be enabled to language accessible to ordinary people who are confused enough by succulents and certiorari and lessi-mandi to be further bewildered by legal grandstanding.

That is why I was elated when I read that sentiment punishing Pagsa for conduct unbecoming a lawyer and an officer of the court. The correct omission of the preposition "of" made my day so early in the morning and inspired this sincere tribute to our imperfect Supreme Court.

Still breathtaking

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

If I have apologized to her over the phone, and thrice face, and she was very gracious to her acceptance. Moreover, she dont owe a written apology, as here it is. My sincerest, albeit belated, apology to Rep. Rodito "Roy" Nicolas of Bohol. I wrote, in my Nov. 8 column on the impeachment of Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. that she, "it would appear, signed, then withdrew, then signed again" the impeachment resolution. It was a parenthetical remark, but such is the power of the press that she received spreadsheets about it. My information, obtained from Congress by a research assistant, was wrong. Nicolas having withdrawn her signature, did not sign again. Sorry Representative Nicolas. Thank you, for being such a good sport about it.)

JUDGE Teresa Yadao has written, in a letter published in this paper only this week, to "clarify certain points" I had raised in my column last Nov. 15. For one, she denies that the appeal with which she disposed of the Kaming bombing case was "breathtaking." After all, says she, the rule is that a judge has 10 days from the time a case is raffled to determine the existence of probable cause for the issuance of a warrant of arrest, and it took her more than a month to do so in this case.

In a way, she is right. There certainly was enough evidence presented by the prosecution to warrant an immediate finding that there was probable cause that a crime had been committed and the accused had a hand in it, which is not the same as proof beyond reasonable doubt. That is what a trial is for.

Consider: There is no question that 11 people were killed or that the accused Lucson et al. I had admitted the killing, although they claimed self-defense. So the only issue is whether the killing was indeed in self-defense — a shoot-out — or it was a robbery. The accused claim that the victims were out in police custody at the time of their deaths — they were just under surveillance.

But the prosecution had affidavits from per-

Yadao says the Manila vs Dukes case is public but rare and exceptional ruling. In the Alkala case, the Supreme Court ruled that if the judge finds, clearly from the evidence, that there is no probable cause, he can simply dismiss the case. But consider the circumstances that warranted the Supreme Court finding in that case that the judge should have decided the case on probable cause: the body of the supposed victim was never found, i.e. there was no evidence that a crime had been committed. The prosecution reasoned that there was no body because the victim had been burned in an open field with the use of tires and gasoline, and the supposedly left no trace of the victim's remains. But the judge did not personally examine the evidence or bother to call the prosecution witnesses (ironically, in that case it was Lucson who headed the team) to question their incredible accounts.

Contrast these with the Estrada case, where the bodies of the 11 victims were found, and where the accused, by claiming self-defense, admitted that they had participated in the killing. The reasoning behind the conclusion that these circumstances are similar to the circumstances in the Alkala case is breathtaking.

It is true that the prosecution did not present Yadao with the latter's findings — that the evidence that may be/may have been apparently even more complete and more damning (new witnesses) than what convinced the Senate that Lucson et al. should be charged with murder. The logic that led Yadao to come to a conclusion opposite to that of the senators is breathtaking.

The Yadao case came to mind because, in that case, Yadao gave the prosecution (Sigfrid Fortun) so much leeway. In the Kaming case, she gave the prosecution no quarter at all, and gave the defense (Fortun) so much leeway. Of course, the appearance of fairness in both cases is beyond her control. What is within her control is how she treats her clients.

No longer in a Volks

At a dinner reception held on Tuesday by Shell Exploration B.V. on behalf of the Malampaya consortium, I was seated next to a prominent Shell diplomatic consultant, the resident of British Ambassador Hal Dimond. Or, rather, his wife was the Italian queen "Boo Pasquale," a delightful story of love, conspiracy and deception performed by two Filipino opera singers at Pavillon Opera. But the topic who opened about by Filipino businessmen and bilateral bonds by some diplomats was the array of investing fortunes that, in 1986, presidential candidate Cory Aquino would be elected. Some of the 2003 story, particularly after having watched his one-on-one interview over ANC, during which he reportedly made very little sense, "Mistaken" Nene, Jaime Ongpin, other executives who owned Shell. They would pull all the strings to ensure that their economic program, including HP3.

* * *

The political scene is in an incredible state of flux. Sen. Radolfo Biazon made a lesser of advances from the LDP, lamenting the "confusion" and failure to respect the adversarial process in the opposition. He joined the camp of former Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, who is leaving his candidacy to Bonoan over with a splash of the Big Boy Toledo. Biazon is joining the first incumbent politician drawn by Bonoan's camp, an important catch for Dar Sabre, though Rep. Rosanna Vallejos Bunoan is reacting with the LDP.

* * *

Yesterday also saw the entry of former President Fidel Ramos into the Liberal Party as its chair, and jumping from the rumbly impression to the real thing. Ramos' political clout is considerable, led by former Senate President Jovito Salonga, at the Aristocrat Restaurant. I looked to locate Manila Mayor Lito Atienza who hosted the lunch, but saw him at a restaurant down the road (though he said it was just a "sample" of things to come. Mulching binds to any Valdezian group LP as Sen. Edsel Lacson once allegedly would turn coat many big name buses to lead its members.

* * *

Speaker Jose de Venecia is also said to be in negotiations this one great party of Florencio Abad, Angara, Mitos Aquino and Jerry Roxas.

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cavanaugh

As yesterday's catch-tabling, I noted the problem, many of many young leaders in the 45 to 50 age bracket, perhaps making it the "youngest" party around. Among them were party president Boy Dutch Abad, Trade Secretary Rol Reyes, Housing Secretary Michael Defensor, Environment Secretary Nereus Acosta, Budget Secretary Ibe and Alma Soares, and Sen. Edu Pangilinan. There were also, many newfaces.

* * *

Arthur's entry into the LP was a masterstroke. It puts him in a better position to seek the vice-presidential nomination of the administration party, where his dismal showing in Senators finds the Sen. Richard Barbers, losing for Senate in 2001 to Sen. Panfilo Lacson. Wanting for Senate is the Sen. Panfilo Lacson, which is dominated by the LP and is actively pushing for his vice-presidential bid. Moreover, while he has supported as an independent for three years, Arthur's entry into the LP marks the official break from Sen. Edgardo Angara, his mentor at the Ayala Law Office during the martial law years. Now as a political observer noted, the Senate died has emerged as his own man.

* * *

Like all political parties, the LP is concerned about whom it will support in the presidential race. Yesterday, the party's national executive council met and decided to defer action to the church on the problem. Clearly dominating the party are staunch allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo, which shouldn't surprise anyone since her father was one of its leaders and two of its founding members went to her funeral. In fact, one of two LDs are being considered for UMBC senatorial lineup, including Senator Aquino.

But some LP leaders also sense one impressing preference for Erap and FPJ. Among those for Noynoy Aquino, Senate Minority Leader Sotto and Rep. Edgar Erice of Caloocan, who said he switched to Erap after GMA and last December she wouldn't run. Yap said she had been misled by Erap's camp to invite the LP to have an alliance with him and also invite Dubai to be his running mate. After some debate, Abad was authorized by the council to constitute a panel that would open a dialogue not just with Erap but with other political groups and individuals. It remains to be seen whether the party of Lito will end up with GMA, though perhaps the LP will not take exactly stand on where to support. The decision has the likely course of action of other parties such as the NPC.

* * *

At the LP gathering, I had a chat with Secretary Manila "Mel-Mel" Jimenez, who is very close to GMA. I queried her about GMA's candidacy and she said that the President prefers to concentrate on doing her work instead of campaigning outright or attacking other candidates. If you notice, Jimenez pointed out, she has not said anything negative about anyone, she has not called anybody names, she has not thrown all kinds of accusations at her. The Palace official said that if GMA is perceived to be fulfilling our projects left and right, this is because these projects are truly now moving on stream and GMA is quite happy about them.

* * *

Reports said the President is happy over the results of the latest Pulse Asia survey showing Roco sinking in the polls. But the fact is that Roco was in a close race with her and FPJ. She has reason to be happy, for as Pulse Asia's Felipe Miranda pointed out yesterday the survey shows that she's the only candidate whose rating rose months ago she was "being pushed out of Malacañang." Miranda said, however, that GMA has to work harder to improve her rural rating. Moreover, as National Security Adviser Roilo Golbez warned in his speech to the Rotary Club, the survey results the vast advantages of a sitting president, which are nothing to sneeze at.

The real score on F4

I DON'T think anyone consciously decides to become a fan. You do not wake up one day and decide to plaster the wall with the smiling face of a pop star. Fans emerge. Likewise, by through a process that I would call the "path of habitual" before they start posting posters or stickers somewhere, becoming a fan takes a certain degree of commitment to investment and effort on someone who is totally inaccessible.

Fanhood may be the lonely and scary when other fans counter of love. When people tell in love, they become yellow creatures who mutilate themselves for having their last effort of praise or the last seat on a bus to their partners even if they are hungry or tired.

Young Blood

Charlene V. Villaseñor

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from students and young grads below — Ed.

From celebrity worship symptoms: they would skip a meal to save money to see their idol in a concert or buy a pop star's CD. Being a fan, like love, requires a lot of sacrifice. But because fans may not have seen their object of affection in person, much less know his personality beyond what is shown on television, in the movies or on a paper, fanhood is a hopeless, unrequited love.

When I was 16, I fell down with adoration of Bi-a1998. I truly believed we were meant to be together. I bought every magazine that had him on the cover or carried even just a brief article on my beloved future honey. I mentally calculated the age difference and created a romantic future we would find. In fact, on a coffee shop in Los Angeles after I reached the age of consent.

I absolutely did not want to have anything to do with grown ups. They were too awkward, too gawky and too young.

It was Brad Pitt for me. I even sent him a recording of my voice and how long to introduce a connection between him and his fans on the school.

That celebrity crush was as real to me as it was to my friends who were in love with their boyfriends. It took a few years and an active contact hostility friction to shake me off my infatuation completely. It was then had said it was that easy to be.

After finally dusting off the last remnants of fanaticism in my system, I looked back at the young me with an amused and somewhat embarrassed eye. I had probably missed out on a lot of the normal teenage "kilig" moments because of my insistence to focus on a Hollywood star who would neither a movie nor even know my living name.

College, family and then work eventually ground me into a sensible woman whose goals were more realistic, like marrying a career and finding a partner in life's journey. I studied diligently in college, became deeply involved in sports, had my share of infatuations and flirtations with "reachable men" and graduated with good grades.

After college, I immediately landed a job with a promising career path. I was a woman with a plan and the "fanatical years" became a distant memory.

One day in the office, I heard a colleague humming a familiar melody. The song was in Mandarin so I couldn't understand it. But I knew the tune because I had seen the song shown often on the MTV and MYX channels. Almost all, I could not understand how a smart, professional, sweet, resourceful consultant could put a group of long-haired pop-rules looked alike on her computer monitor.

I knew the obvious question: "Who are they?" But my friend corrected me immediately. "Mirror Gumbo is the show and F4 are the actors."

"Long hair, Rayo?" I then told her in exasperation. "We don't find men with long hair stay. We're in the Philippines, and Yes Lord and sometimes even John Lloyd don't fit the girls."

After a couple of days of hearing and watching, my ex-fanatical fanhood ate those CDs, each containing one episode of "Meteor Garden." "Here, borrow them, watch them and tell me what you think," she said.

I dutifully borrowed her and I was also slightly curious about all the hoopla. I took the CDs home and turned my usual weekend activity of sleeping and eating into a marathon.

After watching the first one, I had to admit that the normal F4 had very distinctive, individual looks. Okay they may have longer hair than the average Filipino male, but their features were different from each other.

Another thing I realized was that their dialogue was quite funny and witty. I also realized that it is a misnomer that we minded our that I was watching actors acting and not characters in a real situation. There were no hair-pulling, no fights, crocodile tears and high octane screeching. It was just a lighthearted comedy with no pretensions at giving any complex messages.

When I finished watching the third disc, I felt very light. I had a boring day at work but as I was preparing to go to bed, I did not feel wired up at all. The fact I'd seven that had that effect on me was "their Tedi Voyage" which belonged to a totally different genre. I decided that liking any series that would make others feel good enough to feel related by the end of the day was a good thing labeled as cheesy or "bobby."

I returned the discs to my office mate, slightly embarrassed and a little repentant. I enclosed her song, knowing all too well when I told her I was hanging my own "Meteor Garden" set.

And so it began. Just as Alice tumbled down the rabbit hole, I found myself falling in slow motion back to the perched fanhood.

To relax after a particularly demanding day at work, I listen to F4 music, without understanding a word of what they are singing. Before I turn in for the night, I watch their concert visits my street and close my eyes while imagining Jerry Yan's cute smile, Vic Chou's dimples, Ken Chu's boyish play or hunt and laugh as loud, but more Dao is something more to me, like a code that only I understand. I have discovered F4 and I am happier because of it.

I have reassessed my theory about fanhood. Being a fan is not a first-stage delusion or a projection of a parasitic individual desperate for love. Like the wars of the Filipino, fanhood personality. Fanhood does not automatically mean that a person does not find pleasure in his own life and invest therefore for the life he wants through his idol. Being a fan may mean paying P1,000 to watch F4's concert, drenched and sick like a top doll, or singing their music while driving home and learning to appreciate the melody instead of the lyrics.

A fan can be a wife and mother who is torn between going out for dinner with her husband and watching whatever any and watching the last episode of a Jerry Yan mini series where he finally breaks off with the cursed leading lady Ariel can also be a person who is just at peace with the fact that the trappings, the labels and even the numbers do not matter.

It is not the best images, the best dances or the best looking idol who matters, but the hearts that are made glad once he or a member of his team has a new album and work hard to fulfill it. I would rather be inspired by hardworking and, yes, very good looking young men than aging and redundant politicians who would screw their constituents better if their spent as much time at work as they do on childish squabbles and public posturing.

Charlene V. Villaseñor, 25, is a part-time guerrilla marketing officer and full-time NGO worker.

Disturbing developments

At Large

Rina Jimenez-David

HEADS the final installment. I hope, on the story of I, the medical students who suffered sexual assault at the hands of a "senior," a resident of the UP PGH, and gave testimony against Dr. Melvin Arel, as the pun is, "to kill the word that I'm not telling a lie.

In August last year, I through his lawyer Bienvenido Marcelo, filed a formal complaint with the UP Manila Police Station 5 against Arel for rape. He was also believed I and 30-36 is telling the truth. If I was to be believed, her accusations, in the words of lawyer Gonsa, "strongly indicate a touching and crude callous character trait" by lack of discipline and proper decorum, and disrespect for and sexual exploitation of women. It is a culture where sexual harassment and sexual harassment thrive.

Before I told a doctor friend of mine, a woman, about this case, she confirmed I'm also that the orthopedics department has been a hotspot of murderous in PGH. My friend, who is a consultant, told me that she had to warn her female residents to tell on intern. The head of the "ortho" department chanced upon her doing her rotation there and without warning lifted her by the armpits, exclaiming, "You're such a small girl, and so light." The point of the story is that the head of the department had and all the other male doctors around him, laughed. He also decided to keep I still and just calmly remonstrated. "Please put me down, doctor," she said.

"In that case, we women have very little about sex rights," she says. "So I didn't even think I was wronged. But I have never forgotten it."

"Me," I said, "you were only fifteen, and still innocent. I was trying to keep from your mind. What more, I who was raped?"

* * *

TRUE last word, by the way, has been dispelled by Dr. M's counsel, who wrote a long letter in rejoinder to the first column, saying no one part that has ever been accused of rape by a man of her husband's. Ex-parents have told me they are contemplating filing a criminal case against the doctor, but under the UP policy, administrative charges only accuse cases of sexual harassment, which in my case, includes only right-wounds and rape.

Today's this month, Unas wrote to Dr. Reyes calling her attention to two "grave and disturbing" developments in the UP PGH. First, the appointment by the College of Medicine that she be allowed to do her residency at orthopedic surgery outside of UP-PGH. The latter dean of the college had in fact orally given his permission, but Dr. Reyes, as head of the department, is the conscience of the ortho department wrote a letter objecting to the request and insisting that I do her rotation with them.

In a space-saving move to save college dean, I was told that her request had been denied. At 3 o'clock, the dean reasoned that I would continue with a bad precedent, as students might "just ask to be rotated outside for whatever reason."

The dean, who is a woman, also alleged I've overlooked I think: "It's been 18 months and you're still like that. I'm telling you, this will affect your career in surgery." There is always some thing good in everyone."

When I heard this, I told I: "Please ask the dean if she has a daughter and if that daughter is raped, if she would hesitate to study."

The other "grave and disturbing" development in the recent appointment of Dr. M as chief resident of the orthopedic department. Asks Unas: "What is the message of the department... in making [Dr. M] chief resident? That they do not care that [Dr. M] has been accused of raping [a student]? That [Dr. M] is a [chasing is of advice] deserves a promotion?"

Note, too, that as chief resident Dr. M will have direct supervision over I and has the power to destroy her career even before it has begun.

* * *

DIGEST After the morning with newsbeat, I suddenly a relapse of the breakdown she went through last year after the rape. She went in depression for several days and missed her classes. She is currently on medication.

Like it PGH has some boast for from care for I. When she walks through wards and corridors, she can hear people whisper: "That's her, that's the one who's been raped," and can almost "feel" the stares she gets behind her back. Once, while standing in an operation, the surgeon, who was operating on a patient, turned to the other surgeons, asked if she wasn't getting tired with what he had asked her to do. When I told the story mind, the doctor whispered in her ear: "Well, I was just afraid that you'd complain also."

During the hearings and investigations, Dr. Mel professor tried to make it appear that what it assigned between him and I was consensual. There were many times in the course of the hearings, he says, claiming that he the way the dressed and even showed [she was part of PGH's dance troupe], she would not be the eager she claimed to be the night of the assault.

Recently, what I did have to do with the price of business? In one such hearing, the former director of PGH, Dr. Jean Pablo Natanta, testified that, and I'm paraphrasing him, "If [she] would have learned [the drinking, the partying, should not have taken place inside PGH, and doctors should not be consorting with students."

Why not just give up the fight and drop your charges and forget it, advise? asked I.

But right: "If I did that, I would not really be accepting my past. I would be running away for the rest of my life."

Another for the Lions

Sense and Sensibility

Randel L. Mapua

SINCE the end of the World War II, historic properties in the country started to disappear, falling prey to developers, neglect and vandalism due to their lack of their beyond recognition. A significant example was Binondo from which, building by building, one by one, the evidence of the Ganglay and the Ganglay merchant's heritage was gradually lost through private and public action. Of the remaining few, only Escolta still has a certain historic individuality and quality to some. At present Binondo looks no more than a poorer version of Chong Kong or Taiwan.

Historic properties unfortunately are not looked upon as a treasure—a valuable asset to cherish. They are subject to complete promises and areas of modern society and often their preservation appears to be at odds with the immediate needs for housing or infrastructure or development.

Recently, I was informed that a 1930's another building that will soon fall prey to the wrecker's ball. This is the Delgado building, a marvelous art Deco structure, at the corner of Juan Luna and Nueva Vizcaya, presently occupied by the Institute for Corporate Directors. Its one such historic treasure on Juan Luna for years ago and remains as outstanding example of adaptive re-use. If I remember correctly, it has received awards for the renovation although it was in the last time that it did so and so.

There is no question that the world like to demolish it and build a high rise in its place. Well, what can we say? Free of ill, if the Delgado need the money, who are we to argue? Second, I doubt if the Philippine government would ever consider action and "save the property" (Yeah, okay it's an dream, sure) If) Third, the Heritage Bill is some, subject in the Senate or the House, gathering more or fallen or whatever one pollutes in the dropes. Anyway, that's life.

Getting back, the bill was probably a rather quixotic undertaking of the Heritage Conservation Society when it was first established in 1989. It was also a very simple piece of legislation that sought to protect the architectural heritage of the country so that another mindset like the destruction of the Art Deco building could be prevented. Anyway, it is not at least a year for the bill to be approved, drawing inspiration from the national trust organizations of the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom.

When it was finally finished, a group of us trained to see it first. Lauro Legarda, Jess, JC Laurel IV, Ed Calma, Ed Araneta, members of the culture and education committee. I noticed that Mikki was not there. Then I remembered that Mikki was busy working together the Senatorial Finals Lunch-ins. Dinner. Jun Magsaysay.

The chair of SCS at the time, architect Augusto Villalon, took charge of the lesson and, again if I remember correctly, it was Lauro Legarda who proceeded to shepherd us through the House.

Then Edsa II happened, at that point, we lay low for a while and so did the bill by-laws Senator Orr. to find bullet into disrepute temporarily anyway.

Then Erap was ousted by EDSA III, there were hearings and word came back that the National Museum people and Chair Andrew Gonzalez of the National Historical Institute were vehemently against it. I couldn't see why until Gonzalez mentioned that the NHI wanted to take over functions of the National Museum and the NGI.

This was certainly not the bill I envisioned, so I got a hold of a copy of the new bill under discussion. Lo and behold! Right enough, somebody somewhere had proceeded to change the poor thing beyond recognition. Not only that, it, to

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Useless overpass on Meralco Avenue

THERE is an ongoing construction on Meralco Avenue, Pasig City to build a flyover across Julia Vargas Avenue. There is even signage indicating whether that is the project of the national or local government, perhaps out of shame for its total and absolute stupidity.

Meralco Avenue is a short stretch of road that starts from Ortigas Avenue in front of Mercedes, and ends in Shaw Boulevard. The stretch is usually full of vehicles during rush hours, as there are several major bottlenecks at the following points: Meralco Avenue-Ortigas, Meralco Avenue-Onyx Street, Meralco Avenue-Julia Vargas, Meralco Avenue-Exchange Road, Meralco Avenue-Renaissance, Meralco Avenue-E. Rod Street, Meralco Avenue-Capt. Javier Street and Meralco Avenue-Shaw Boulevard, which are less than a kilometer apart.

By building an overpass at the corner of Meralco Avenue and Julia Vargas Avenue, you may eliminate the bottleneck there, but the cars have nowhere to go anyway since they will get stuck in the Meralco Avenue-Exchange Road, Meralco Avenue-Renaissance, Meralco Avenue-E. Rod Street, Meralco Avenue-Capt. Javier Street and Meralco Avenue-Shaw Boulevard bottlenecks, or if going in the opposite direction, at the Meralco bottleneck. We will just end up with cars being stuck in the flyovers.

Undoubtedly, the flyover is costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of pesos with no useful purpose other than to line the pockets of crooked government officials.

The number one remedy is to stop this government officials' just want to grab anything and everything, without ever bothering to hide their discrepancy anymore.

—ANTONIO C. BATTLEDEF,
Dandaya Law Office,
3-11028 Philippine Bank
Embarga Centre, Embarga Road,
Cebiqui Centre, Pasig City

Misdirected ire at ECC

THIS is in reaction to Narciso Villanueva's letter (PDI, 11/15/03) titled, "ECC disability claim tricked around."

Allow us to explain our side on the issue raised. Our records show that on Sept. 12, 2003, the Employees' Compensation Commission (ECC) received the letter of appeal of Villanueva with incomplete documents. As a matter of procedure, on Sept. 25, 2003, we sent to the Social Security System (SSS), the administering agency for employees' compensation claims for the private sector, requesting for elevation of the complete records of Villanueva's claim for disability.

We received the complete records from the SSS on Nov. 4, 2003 and evaluation of the case has been completed on Nov. 12, 2003. At the moment, the case is scheduled for deliberation by the Technical Review Committee in its next meeting.

The decision of the ECC denying the claim of Villanueva's three wives in various duties is not within the control of the ECC. The ECC is vested with appellate jurisdiction under Presidential Decree 626, as amended to review and decide claims for compensation denied by the SSS or the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), as the case may be. The administering agencies have original jurisdiction to initially evaluate the compensability of claims referred to the work-related contingencies.

It seems that the out of Villanueva's ire against this office is the Sept. 25, 2003 letter of the ECC addressed to the SSS. The tenor of the letter gave him the impression that the ECC is assuming the case for re-evaluation of the claim when it has already been decided three times by the SSS branch office. We wish to emphasize that it is the standard procedure of the ECC to request the SSS (or GSIS) main office to take a second look at the decision of denial of its branch offices. It has been the experience of the ECC that in some claims denied by the branch offices, the main office would reverse the same after re-evaluation.

This office is not remiss in its mandate as the government agency tasked under PD 626, as amended, to implement this social legislation, it assumes a liberal stance in interpreting the law in favor of the working man.

—ELISEO D. JOSEPHO,
executive director,
Employees' Compensation Commission, 2/F ECC Bldg., SSS Ave. Cd Puyat Ave., Makati City

LETTERS

Scantily clad dancers on Commonwealth

BY THE LOOS afternoon of Tuesday, Dec. 7, traffic began to build up from Mangaldan Market along Commonwealth Avenue all the way to the Sandiganbayan. Judging by the huge crowd watching on the street and the nearby overpass, I surmised the build-up was caused by a major vehicular accident. But every car passed when I saw that the reason for the commotion was more than a dozen scantily dressed women dancing provocatively in the middle of the street.

What made the sight even more shocking was that hawkers and traffic officials, wearing their IDs, were the ones directing the whole spectacle. Long ballbooms and microphones, the men were prompting the women, "Sige! Sigue! 1,2,3,4 — who who... who who?" it was a floor show in broad daylight, in the middle of Commonwealth Avenue in full view of children and students from the nearby Commonwealth Elementary School.

I wonder what could possibly make these women degrade themselves in such a manner. Whatever the reason, it was an absolutely distressing thing to see.

—JUAN B. DADO,
31-01 Block,
Bella Petrona Subd.,
Barangay Pasong Tamo, QC

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Let us protest with our ballots

ANTI-ADMINISTRATION rallyists staged a rally at Makati City two months ago, calling for the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo and Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. But it looks like they failed to name who they would replace them with.

As a simple citizen and a voter, I am just wondering why they cannot wait for the next national elections in May next year where they can exercise their proper vote. Obviously, that will be the best time for Filipinos to really change their political leaders in a legal way called suspension or the end of the year by obligating them to pay the rounds of holding rallies, of which many are already tired.

I call upon everyone to respect the will of the majority, which will be expressed later in the ballots during elections. Majority rule is the essence of democracy which we should uphold if we want power to remain in the hands of the majority.

—FRUMENCIO G. TAJAS,
1192 S North (with),
Angeles Village, Talon IV,
Las Piñas City

Old venues of large-scale graft and corruption

PRESIDENTIAL Decree 777 requires all national government agencies and offices to return to the national treasury all cash balances at the end of the calendar year or on Dec. 31 of each year. And if this decree is strictly followed, chances are that the national government would be minimized, if not altogether eliminated.

There are millions in government. If the following circumstances are present:

- Spending more than what the government has received in the form of revenues and taxes.
- Decline in revenue collections of the BIR, Customs and other collecting agencies.
- The remaining cash balances in the national treasury at the end of the calendar year.
- Padoring of collections through falsification of public documents.
- Overpricing of infrastructure contracts mostly on horizontal construction projects.
- Open deliveries of supplies and materials as well as services.
- Unliquidated cash advances amounting to billions of pesos existing in the books of treasuries of the national government for a number of years or decades already.

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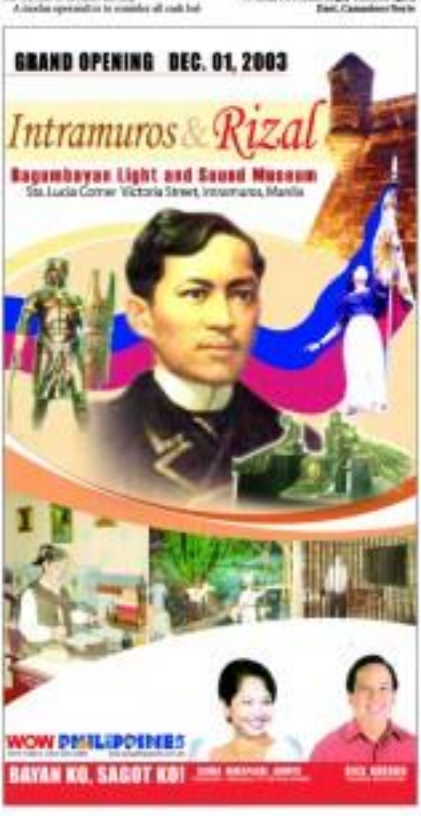

[author block]

Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

[author block]

Attack wounds vice mayor, kills pal

THE VICE mayor of Bagulibas, Pangasinan was wounded while his companion was killed when armed men opened fire at their vehicle in Barangay Cayanga in the town on Thursday night.

Supt. Rolando Magno, special operations group director of the Pangasinan police, said Vice Mayor Dennis Illana, who was driving his Nissan Frontier pickup, was on his way home when at least three suspects fired at his vehicle.

Illana suffered from a bullet wound in the right arm while his companion, Samuel Agbayo, 54, died from bullet wounds in differ ent parts of the body.

Magno said Illana was saved because the gunmen aimed their guns at the front passenger seat where he usually sits. He said Illana's vehicle had 11 bullet holes.

"The driver slipped in another village so he drove the pickup while laghaya, who was sitting at the back seat, transferred to the front passenger seat," Magno said.

Illana managed to drive the pickup for at least 50 meters and hide in a house nearby.

Magno said one of Illana's companions, Pedro Ramos, escaped unhurt but police could not locate him.

The motive for the attack is still unknown. Rolando Ilocto, Pilar, Northern Luzon Bureau

CHOLESTEROL SHIPMENT
A truckload of roasted pig makes its way through tight security during the recently concluded 19th Aduvantage Congress rally in Baguio City.

Aborted sale of jeepney led to Maguindanao slays

COTABATO CITY—A failed jeepney deal led to Thursday's massacre that claimed the lives of five people (but six as police had earlier reported), including a public schoolteacher, in Barira town in Maguindanao, police said yesterday.

Chief Supt. Josaf Ramida, chief of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) police, said the Mamon family had earlier offered to buy the Omar family's passenger jeep but the deal had bogged down for still unknown reasons.

It was not clear how a failed deal could trigger the bloodbath but Ramida said the two families also figured in a serious misunderstanding in the past.

But Barira Mayor Alex Tomawis said the previous dispute, which started with the death in Quinapa a few months ago of a Haji Mamon, a relative of the Omars, had already been settled and all was going well for the two families.

"The issue of the death of Haji Mamon in Quinapa has long been settled," said Tomawis.

Supt. Jun Saffarani, ARMM police spokesperson, said the jeep, which became object of the killer dispute, had been taken in police custody because the suspects used this during the attack.

Saffarani said the suspect, Ingan and Dayang Omar, were now being hunted down.

Witnesses had positively identified the two as the men who led a group of 10 armed men that fired at a wedding planning session involving the Mamon family in Sawagay Poblacion on Thursday morning.

Killed during the attack were Alimay Mamon and his brother Bahar, Norahna Mactar and Dalak Sultana and Normilah Mamarang, a teacher in Barira and a resident of Cotabato City. Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Cop slain in Bataan raid on kidnappers hailed hero

SIMBUKLIS CITY—"Isa kong bayani (She are a hero)."

Placards that his neighbors made from dubo and old calendars bear that recognition for PO1 Josefito Esguerra.

He shares the award with the separated community in Purok 1, Barangay Ato Nicolas here in a chapel where his colleagues have mounted to bid Esguerra, 31, farewell.

The remains of then Esguerra, slain in a clash with the country's most notorious kidnap-for-ransom syndicate in Pantabangan, Nov. 25, lies in a white casket draped with the Philippine flag.

The gang leader, Dr. Roberto Obrien Yap, and three of his men were killed in that gunfight in Cinalaydiman, Bataan.

On Wednesday, President Macapagal-Arroyo joined the village's wake for Esguerra whom she hailed as a "hero" in the government's battle against terrorism crimes.

Ms Macapagal led the rites for his posthumous promotion to Police Officer 2.

In the announcement read during the rites, Esguerra was commended for "acts of conspicuous courage and gallantry in the face of armed enemy."

In the order, Chief Supt. Vidal Quanol, Central Luzon police director, said Esguerra "willingly made the ultimate sacrifice of offering his life to ensure that the mission of the raiding team is successful."

PSSI Ester Nuang, the leader of the city's Special Weapons and Tactics Team to which Esguerra belonged, said then kept the battle going as Yap tried to escape and even as Esguerra has dead here to there.

"It was painful seeing him there dead but we pressed on," Nuang said.

Esguerra's friend, PO1 Juan Carlos Ibarra, said he wanted to immediately see Esguerra's body. "He was in the line of fire so I could not get near him. My tears swelled as I saw him," Ibarra said.

"We still cannot accept that we lost him," Nuang said.

Marissa, Esguerra's 42-year-old mother, said the late stopped shedding tears for her only son, the fourth to the brood of five.

"Nanay (Esguerra) made a sense to his brief life," Marissa said.

The President gave Esguerra's mother P100,000 as burial assistance. The Angeles City government and the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce gave also P100,000 each.

Rosette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Ombudsman suspends town execs over corpse case

TARIJAL, Sarigan del Sur—For forcibly taking the corpse of a woman during a wake on Aug. 14, the top two executives of this capital town had been suspended for 6th days by the Ombudsman-Mindanao but several others officials in connection with the incident had been cleared.

The Department of Interior and Local Government in Caraga would implement the order, dated Nov. 21, against Mayor Marybeth Ty-Delgado and Vice Mayor Alexander Pimentel.

The suspension was triggered by a complaint from Felipa Buenaflor, daughter, and Angeles Buenaflor, daughter-in-law, of Trinidad Buenaflor.

Trinidad died in the first week of July.

The surviving relatives of Trinidad decided to have her body embalmed for a month because some of their relatives had yet to come home from the United States.

The body was kept in a coffin at the family's ancestral home in Barangay Balibahan.

But after more than a month, the corpse remained unburied, eliciting complaints from neighbors because it was then beginning to smell.

Nilita said the family was still awaiting the arrival of her mother's sister from America so the body could not be buried yet.

Nilita then contacted the funeral parlor to preserve her mother's body for 15 days more.

But the neighbors grew becoming restive and had sought the help of local officials.

It was during this time that the complaint against Delgado and other officials took shape.

In her complaint with the Ombudsman, Felipa said Mayor Delgado allowed to help in rescinding her mother's burial if she will open the road, which some residents had illegally constructed on their land.

She said she refused the offer and Delgado sacks her.

Felipa said the mayor directed them to bury the remains of Trinidad as soon as possible because "it injures and endangers the health and safety of the people living at Sitio Lubo, Balibahan."

When she refused, Felipa said Delgado and Pimentel led "forceful taking of the remains" of her mother. Bert Penaro, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Earthquake, storm bring P120M loss

TACLOBAN CITY—The Office of Civil Defense in Eastern Visayas has reported that close to P120 million worth of infrastructure was damaged due to the typhoon and earthquake that hit the region over the last two weeks.

The two calamities also resulted in the death of two persons, one of whom was a five-month-old baby.

Adriano Fungo, OCD regional director, said Eastern Samar and Northern Samar, two of the poorest provinces in the region, suffered the most.

The typhoon that hit the region on Nov. 13 and the earthquake on Nov. 19 totalled to P117.9 million in combined damages in the two provinces, mainly in the agriculture and fishery sectors, Fungo said. Joey Gallo-bit, PDI Visayas Bureau

Reds tell FPJ: Bare stand on Left issues

LEGAZPI CITY—If movie actress-king and candidate for president Fernando Poe Jr. wants support from the communists, he should preserve a clear stand on various issues, according to communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal.

"What's his position on the stalled peace talks between the National Democratic Front and the government? About the anti-people globalization policy of the government, the need for a genuine land reform and the rampant human rights violations by the police and the military?" Rosal said in a mobile phone interview in reaction to Poe's declaration of his candidacy.

He added, "FPJ can't escape declaring his positions on these issues. The militants and progressive forces and even the revolutionary movement are now anxiously waiting for him to do so."

The spokesperson of the rival underground communist group, also urged Poe to formally declare his platform of government.

"Poe should end assumptions as to his political platform," Fausto Ramirez, Bombo ng Bayang pagsusong Pilipino spokesperson, said.

"It remains to be seen whether FPJ the man will be an incarnation of the FPJ the actor who is hero of the people onscreen," Ramirez said.

He warned that Poe's presidential candidacy "can as easily turn out to be a bomb instead of a blockbuster for the 'masa' for he can be so easily co-opted by reactionaries that everyday are gravitating around us appears winner."

"The battle now begins for the end of FPJ. He will be pulled in one direction by the pro-survival/pro-politician supporters around popular reforms. But the opportunist politicians who want to use him to wrest power from the administration will pull him in the other direction," he added. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

ELOOH
The climate in Bagyon City proves itself forever friendly again as rivals calling different types of flowers mourn again in the country's summer capital.

ROUNDUP

PNP warns vs reb attacks

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—The Philippine National Police (PNP) last week directed all its units nationwide to tighten its security in preparation for the convergence of Bonifacio Day on Nov. 30. In a circular to all provincial directors, Deputy Director Lumiqued Ebreo, PNP director for operations, ordered that the yearly commemoration of the birthday of Andres Bonifacio, "is usually marked with political activities by militant, leftist and cause-oriented groups." He also alerted all police stations for the possible attacks of the New People's Army. Nov. 30 also coincides with the founding anniversary of Kabataang Makabayan, the youth arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Ebreo said police should "closely monitor economic key points, critical infrastructure, airports, public places and areas of convergence."
Marlar Alonso, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

1 die in road crash

LAOAG CITY— Two women were killed and five others were hurt after a bus hit four parked jeeps and a tricycle here on Nov. 10. Police said Mary Rose Ong, 25, and Catherine Agundar, 21, died instantly after they were struck by the jeep that hit Metro Manila-bound RD Express bus #1. Reports said the bus was on its way to its terminal from here. Its driver had reached a blind curve in Brgy. 37 Laoag-Gabriel, the city's traffic chief, said bus driver Bernard Castillo fled. *Jayson Cruz, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

NPA rebel slain

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—The Army reported a Huk New People's Army rebel was killed in Wednesday in Obligation, Aurora. Col. Jovencio Narag, commander of the 703rd Infantry Brigade, identified the slain rebel as Jesus Dominic alias Ka Jos of the NPA's Bulacan-Pampanga provincial party committee's Guerrilla Front 1. Narag's report said army soldiers encountered several rebel rebels in the 7:5 minute gunfight that broke out at 5:30 a.m. A .22 cal rifle was recovered from the encounter site. *Ronalyn Crispin, PDI Central Luzon Bureau*

21 hurt in mishap

BAGUIO CITY—Twenty-one people were hurt Wednesday when a bus bound for Baguio plunged into a ravine in Benguet. Benguet, some five hours from here, the Office of Civil Defense said. The Dangers bus was negotiating a slippery incline at 10th Brgy in Barangay Balacbac in Mankayan when it fell 139 feet below. The injured were taken to the Benguet General Hospital in the capital town of La Trinidad for treatment.
Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

WB funds project

LUMBON CITY — The city government and the Land Bank of the Philippines have signed a financing for P70-million drainage master plan project for nine barangays here using a World Bank loan. Mayor Vivian Dolgora said the project, which will begin early next year, includes the repair and improvement of damaged roads and bridges and the construction of a drainage network to minimize flooding during the rainy season.
Lawrence Bellen Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Drug pusher killed

NAVOTAS CITY — Police said a suspected drug pusher was killed while two others were arrested after an encounter with police in San Luis here on Wednesday. Reports said the operation was launched after residents complained about the suspects' alleged illegal activities in their area. Police said Ronel Dionisio, 30, was driving his tricycle on the national highway when the suspects shot and killed him. He died before reaching the Central Navotas Municipal Hospital here.
Lawrence Bellen Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Huk member slain

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—A suspected member of the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB) was killed while two others were arrested after an encounter with police in San Luis here on Wednesday. Reports said the operation was launched after residents complained about the suspects' alleged illegal activities in their area. Police said Ronel Dionisio, 30, was driving his tricycle on the national highway when the suspects shot and killed him. He died before reaching the Central Navotas Municipal Hospital here.
Joel Pabico, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

Ateneo homecoming

FORT BONIFACIO—Ateneo de Davao University celebrates its annual grand homecoming on Dec. 5, from 7 to 11 p.m. at the Ateneo de Davao University Museum. The event will be held in the Ateneo de Davao University Museum. The event will be held in the Ateneo de Davao University Museum. The event will be held in

SPORTSWATCH

Pacquiao tourism guest

MGM Country Ambassador Manny Pacquiao heads celebrities gracing the showcasing promotion of the first Sports Tourism and Travel Adventure Show to-mor row at the Glorietta5 2 in Makati ave. Tourism Sec. Richard Gordon will reward the sports hero with a "dream vacation showcase" to one of the country's big resort attractions. Cynthia Thaman-Alcantara, director Cynthia Carreon is head of the Philippine Convention and Travel Corp., which set up the trade fair. Admission inside at 4 p.m. with fashion Presenters Ethan "Bitoy" Reyes and Gordon.

Griffins shock Doves

THE GOLDEN Sun Lorenzo Griffins took advantage of the absence of key player Ali Stamps and Irvin Smith, who sat out the 79-year-old Mandaluyong Stadium 35 Fran-cis of Assisi in the 11th National Cocktail Regional Athletic Association meet's basketball tournament at the 65 d ages. Three men to remember most at Xyrus St. Francis' because the Edge Mountain coached San Sebastian College-Cavite Recruits on four of Group A with their 3-0 win-less record. De Chairman and Dolfo Cabrera Jr. Lorenzo Griffins' Jeff Javier and Jeffrey Javier, Mark Anthony Mamon showed the way for the Griffins, who composed to 3-1, with 36 points while Simon had 23 points and Ken Rivera 13. PSBA patronized Lyceum, 81-42, to Men to Group B record to 2-1.

Team Shimano tops bass tilt

SONG Nino and Cenh Santos of Team Shimano won the Standard Insurance Bass Fishing Championship of the Philippine Bass Anglers Sports Association (Pbasa) Carmona Lake, Cavite. Lagoon last weekend to celebrate two-day round of the PSBT Angler of the Year 2XPO ser-ies, despite low water logs go. The Nino Santos tandem's 10-bass catchgot at 11.7#1 kg against Edmund Lim's three-catch of the Light Tackle Division. Since January, Nino's has after first places in the Seven Under Guard, plus last month's runner-up finish with Santos behind Lim, technically gave Nino the Overall Angler of the Year plum. Lim is virtually the Light Tackle AOY. For details, contact PSBT secretary Camille Jamio at 253-0040 and 253-0043 or e-mail cgf19498@yahoo.com or visit www.fishingPH.com.

Konka picks up 2nd win

DEFENDING champion Konka Premier '86, 6GB Cooking Gals '91 and Genesis 2002 picked up their second straight victories and stayed unbeaten on the Shoe Emporium Magic Six Group A-B district basketball tournament at the SSMS gym. Konka Pluchos, getting 17 points each from Jr. Llang Lia and Francis Ta, beat Jan Spurs 20-08, 61-40. LCBC Cooking Gals, powered by Anthony Eyo's 29 points and Johannes Jaro's 16, crushed Expedition 78, 108-38.

Incredibol 5-cock derby

PROVINCIAL sabungeros and challenge cock aficionados in Bulacan Mega Corridor in Bocaue, Bulacan, Bocaue Bulacan 5-Cock Derby" starting at 1 p.m. today. Among those guessing for the P2.25-million prize and Honorbol Bocaue Bronze are 2003 World Slasher Cheloy Prey Bolanos, Rex Mucio, Rick Cuadra, Dennis Luansing, LCBC Breeder of the Year Randy Valentino, Don Lacson, Ronald Sarandinin, Anthony Lim, Rod Villaruben, Gerry Ramos, Y Hontiveros, Christopher Tio, Milton Wallace and Warren B. Bocaue. Weighing-Bin 4am this weekend, Nov 29, Nov. 8, 17 and 19 for preliminaries. Rolly Cagas, who breezed the entry fee to P8,888. Registration for Dec. 6 and 11 eliminations is open. Interested parties may contact 920-2211 or 800-1808.

Yearend Blockbuster

THE MEN'S Las Piñas Cocktail, now fully unleashed, presents the "Yearend Blockbuster 5-Cock Derby" on Dec. 13. All stake is P7.5-million cash prize for an entry fee of P10,000. Derby host is Kenny Ramon of Lal Whut. Winning Rose invited are Gov. Ric Puerto, astrologist Patrick Antonio, Danny Lagon, Gov. Tony Mel of Bacolod, newspaper publisher Butch Macaraeg, Mayor Nino Aguilar, former ambassador Leandro Mendoza, Brgy. chairman Ralph Raymund Velayo, ex-host Joel Fernandez of Pampanga, Mediterranean Brothers, Angus Brothers and Boy de Roca. Submissions of weights is on Dec. 12 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Interested parties may contact (02) 5-1282.

Mayor nears GP title

HEYSSONG champion Jenny Mayor took a big step toward clinching his fifth grandprix championship title in the title-section, event on Remington Industrial. The top land in the Classic outdrive going into the ninth and final qualifying leg of the 2003 Philippine Thoroughbred Horse Organizer or PTHO. 2003 ace Miss Pilar Bocaue Land Bank Pinoy Mayor Jenny Mayor developed orchestra frontrunner Tyrone Cruz after finishing 2nd for third in the eighth leg on Oct. 26. For details, contact the Aces at 888-8838.

NBA Viewing Party

IN CELEBRATION of the 2003-2004 NBA Season, ESPN Star Sports announces its yearly gathering of the basketball faithful: the NBA Viewing Party. The event will be held on Saturday, Nov. 22 at 11 a.m. today. To be featured is the Los Angeles Lakers against the defending champion San Antonio Spurs.

Luzon Regional Football

THE LUZON Regional Football Championship in the Men's Open division will start 9:30 a.m. tomorrow at the SPLIT football field, according to Philippine football federation (PFF) Activity Romualdo. Opening ceremony guests include Gov. Romulo Valencia and the new PFF president, who will be known on-ing tomorrow. Laguna Football Association president Edward Magdaleno said the participating teams are Laguna, Rizal, Bataan, Ormoc, Mindoro, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Isabela, Cagayan, Mindoro and Laguna. The opening match is Ormoc vs Laguna.

SPORTS PARTNERS Samsung Electronics Philippines president and CEO Sung Yeol Kim (second from left) and Philippine Olympic Committee president Cabo L. Bayot shake hands after signing the contract for Samsung's support to POC activities. With them, are Chong Ha Jung (left), Samsung VP for sales and marketing, and POC first VP Elena Hontiveros.

ASIAN SOFTBALL MEET

Blu Boys renew old feud

THE SEVENTH Asian men's softball tournament opens this morning and concludes five days from now with the result expected to be no different from the six previous ones—either Japan or the Philippines winning the championship.

The defending champion Japanese and the Blu Boys have prevented bare three times and are looking able, ready and confident to make the finals again of this event serving as the Asian qualifying round for the 2004 world championship in New Zealand.

Four members made up the opening program at the Rizal Stadium, with the Blu Boys and the Japanese favored to immediately make their presence felt when they face their respective rivals at the start of the one-round, two-group elimination.

No less than Bayer Super, the No. 1 batter in the Blu Boys' line-man-nat, will take the mound when the Filipinos open their bid against host in the upper half of the afternoon doubleheader at 2 p.m.

Like the Filipinos, the Japanese, a fighting second to New Zealand in the 2000 world meet in South Africa, should have no trouble winning their first assignment against Thailand at 4 o'clock.

Chinese Taipei plays India at 9 a.m. and Indonesia battles Hong Kong at 11 in morning games kicking off the day's inaugural matches in the tournament organized by SSA-Phil and sponsored by Manly Jeans, Department of Tourism, PGIT, Star Miguel Corp., Philippine Sports Commission, Cronos and Philippine Tobacco Institute.

Bryan Cho of South Korea, president of the Softball Confederation of Asia, will make the ceremonial pitch assisted by ASA-Phil president and Manila Rep. Harry C. Angping and Philippine Olympic Committee president Cito Sayoc during the simple opening ceremonies set at 1 p.m.

On the eve of the tournament, slugging second baseman Bayer Super got a lot of dating to host the Japanese for the title but he remains confident the Blu Boys can get the job done.

"They (Blu Boys) worked hard, realized hard for the tournament. They really want to get back at the Japanese. They say they can do it and I believe them because they worked hard and realized hard for this one," said Angping.

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FIRST IN RP
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Waray-waray defended

By Rolando D. Borrinaga
Tacloban City

THE WARAY-WARAY, the people who speak the Binisayan language of Leyte and Samar, remains a scorned linguistic group at present. Thus, many native speakers of this language prefer to hide their ethnic identity outside the region by speaking another language, oftentimes Tagalog with either a heavy or queer accent.

The ethnic label was always "Waray-waray" (verb, stress on all syllables), to refer to both the people and the predominant language of Eastern Visayas. At least, the label stayed that way until the 1950s when the "Waray-waray" starting the last Sesa Silence, which became the breakneck speed on the Leyte-Samar people and their culture.

The movie and its theme song, the title of which was grossly mispronounced by the Tagalog actors, made them the cultural scapegoats for the underside of the Filipino nature.

Somehow, in recent decades, half of the two-syllable word label got lost or was dropped, and the word "Waray" (with stress on the second syllable) was appropriated to substitute for the original label.

Of course, the literal meaning of the substitute half-label is "none" or "nothing," which connotes a desperate state or condition of hopelessness.

The dropping of half the label seems to have been enthusiastically welcomed by Imee Lady Marcos Romualdez Marcos, who rallied against the negative connotation of the single word and eventually dismissed the substantive of the original two-word label for her people and their language.

'May ada-ada'

In her heyday months in fact attempted to substitute her artificial label with "may ada-ada." However, contrary to her wish, the "Waray-waray" tag stuck; "may ada-ada" was rejected as substitute label, and its meaning evolved to include persons who suffer from occasional loss of sanity.

So for now, "Waray-waray" or its shortened version "Waray" is largely perceived as an embarrassing label among the subordinal segment of the Leyte-Samar population. Yet the persistence of this label somehow invites the suspicion that "Waray-waray" must have been an honorable identity and source of pride during ethnic times.

Listed as book into this line of thinking and found the following:

- Jesuit words, "The Antiquity of the Philippines," (C. Francis de la Costa translation) describe colonial rules of a part of Island as the Spanish contact encountered as "Waray Tapang" (i.e., Hot Spot).

This obviously Waray-waray-land probably ruled a territory that included the present coasts of the so-to Leyte and Bato Ursula to Bohol, whose municipal governments are still disputing over the ownership of a coast and a boat that are sites of a multi-million-reserved farm in the Canonoo Sea.

- In his English translation of some Chinese manuscripts on Philippine-Chinese contacts during the pre-Spanish era, the late D. Willlock Bruce, first mentioned about ornamental teeth or enamel parts of imperial China by warriors from the Binisaya (i.e., Isaya-Samar). These ruled-mighty have ordered their teachers (literally, "belonging to Big Boat"). Daya (Big Boat) seemed to be the member of a great Waray-waray confederate chief who once ruled over these, if not the whole, of Samar and some parts of Leyte. The Tagalogs, who were probable guests of Daya, presumably visualized his name later and memorialized the word to refer to a "boat" of "thoroughfare."
- Probably a Waray-waray native himself was Lapu-lapu, our earliest national hero. In a paper (his Fr. Miguel A. Bernad, S.J., published in Himalayan journal in 1991, I hypothesized that Lapu-lapu might have been the chief of Dagami-Burol, an ancient village in the capital town of Burol, in Bikol province. "Bago intelled," the ethnic Pinoy for "like a symbol of a great victory or conquest," seemed to have been the pacific-member of Lapu-lapu, named making his victory over Ferdinand Magellan in the Battle of Mactan on April 27, 1521.

Supposedly unsympathetic Lapu-lapu's "pacific-ist" domain, while Mactan might have been his "urban" domain for trade and ethnic relations with Cebu, an international trade center during his time. Like some part of Bohol, Mactan might have been Waray-waray territory or dominant.

While the above historical speculations, we can infer that the "Waray-waray" identity was associated with superior and admirable traits during ethnic times. "Waray-waray" seemed to indicate excellent valor and boldness, audacious, aggressiveness, and native heroism against white-skinned colonizers.

That we now believe the exactly opposite connotation of "Waray-waray" and seek to dissociate ourselves from the shame, may be attributed to the debasing effects of our colonial miseducation, and to the continuing intrusion of "invasive" and "Imperial Malaite" cultures into our way of thinking.

It is time for the Waray-waray people to again take pride in their identity, to reconcile themselves of the self-inflicted shame presently associated with their ethnic label, and to strive to accentuate the positive traits of their ancestors in the 21st century context.

Bush sneak visit to Iraq stuns GIs

Front page A1

whose prolonged unveiling was tense and characterized by interrupted conversations as problems brought more calls to his eyes.

"I bring a message on behalf of Americans: We thank you for your service, we are proud of you and America stands solidly behind you," Bush told the troops, shortly from the US Army's 1st Armored Division and the 82nd Airborne.

Hillary, too

Hot on the heels of Bush's lightning overnight visit, senior former US first ladyWife Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, who arrived in Baghdad later Friday, officials said.

Clinton was due to spend just one day in the Iraqi capital after her visit to Afghanistan Thursday in which she spent Thanksgiving with the troops there, and a visit to an American military cemetery.

Before lunch in Baghdad, she met with senior officials of the Coalition Provisional Authority including US overseer Paul Bremer, and Clinton's spokesperson.

"She does had lunch with troops from the Texas town (Bush's birth) in the dining hall at the palace," she said, referring to the US secret weapons of Saddam Hussein vehicle to save the seat of the occupation administration.

"At the moment, she is on a visit with a military division outside the country zone," said the spokesperson.

Clinton is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and has been making her tour of US troops deployed in conflict zones accompanied by officials to land fire, Jack Reed.

Almost 300 US troops have been killed in Iraq since the US-led assault to oust Saddam Hussein began on March 20, 186 of them since May 1, when Bush declared major combat over.

No retreat

Bush thanked American troops, who are constantly under attack from a deadly guerrilla insurgency, and vowed that US forces would prevail.

"We did not charge hundreds of miles through the heart of Iraq, pay a terrible price in casualties, defeat a ruthless dictator and liberate 25 million people only to retreat before a band of thugs and assassins," he said.

"We will prevail. We will stay because our cause is just. We will win because we will stay on the offensive."

Afterward Bush drank lunch with soldiers and took a photo in the chow line, dishing out food.

Top secret

The top secret, security-laden trip took place as Washington and its allies came under intense pressure in Iraq.

Joe Biden Carlos, the Italian Embassy was hit by a rocket, the latest in a series of increasingly audacious attacks by guerrillas fighting the US-led occupation, and five days before Bush flew in there, a missile struck a cargo aircraft taking off from Baghdad's former Saddam International Airport.

A new US-backed plan to hand sovereignty back to Iraqis was set to be changed after objections from the most revered leader of the long-oppressed Shi'ite Muslim majority.

The 37-year-old president, whose absence from active service in Vietnam was an issue during his election campaign, was applied to representing many of his troops and bolstering their morale.

"It took due donors and persons of courage," said Sgt. Gilbert Hall from Oklahoma, as he returned from a night patrol through Saddam Hussein's still dangerous home town of Tikrit.

"It's a very morale booster," said Hall of the 4th Infantry Division where he learned of Bush's flying visit to Baghdad.

"I didn't get to see him but when morale is that far down enough to come and visit."

PR coup

Analysts said Bush's surprise visit was a public relations coup, but was unlikely to boost sagging domestic support for US involvement in Iraq, analysts said.

"It's public relations for the American public. It's a symbolic action," said Stephen Zunes, a professor of political science and a Middle East specialist at the University of San Francisco.

"I think there is some need to give some kind of gesture that shows that he supports the troops," Zunes said.

"I think the troops are demoralized, dealing with problems. If the commander in chief comes, even though only for two hours in the airport, it helps them," said Judith Kipper, a Middle East expert at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Bush is the latest in a line of presidents who have had to boost the morale of US soldiers on the frontlines. Reuters, AFP

Biazon joins Roco camp; Lito O sees landslide win

Front page A1

con Thursday night and formalized their mutual agreement for the latter to join the alliance's senatorial slate.

Magsaysay

Andy Zialcita Biazon, former Senate Vice-Presidential Pimentel Chavez and lawyer Mel Mandiola are on run for senatorial tickets the alliance to be called "Big one" or "Bigger."

Roco said they had about 14 other "nominees" for their senatorial lineup, including Chief Superintendent Magsaysay, TV host Cesar Montano and Joy Belmonte, former environment chief Antonio Nuay Jr. and Grace Ramos Aldaco, daughter of former President Fidel Ramos.

He said the alliance would finalize the lineup, including his running mate, at least for the filing of candidacies between Dec. 13 and Jan. 2.

Magsaysay, former chief of the Southern Police District, yesterday said the phone interview that he had "voluntarily submitted himself" as a senatorial candidate of the alliance.

"We [unnamed aspirants] will still undergo a selection process to maximize ability a nomination at the NAMFREL Senate Pre-Testing than 8 to among those chosen," he said.

Magsaysay said no election protest was "forced" them to up positions are because it promised security of tenure.

He also said that as a senatorial there would be more opportunities for him to serve the country.

Magsaysay, 55, plans to retire in December after 32 years in the police service.

Overtures

Biazon said he had received overtures from other parties. He declined to reveal them.

But a source disclosed that the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats had offered Biazon a slot in its senatorial lineup.

The source said among the Lakas officials who offered Biazon positions were Mr Magsaysay himself, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Interior Secretary Jose Lina and Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

Biazon took a leave of absence from the LDP to be free of what he called the "confusion" surging in the party, which is split on its choice of standard-bearer.

Some LDP members want party mate Gerardo to be the standard-bearer, while party leaders Senator Edgardo Angara and Senate Secretary Franklin Drilon are backing Roco.

Earlier, Biazon said the real president should be someone who is "less confrontational, less adversarial and less vindictive."

Landslide

In Cebu City, Lito Osmeña said he expects a landslide victory for Roco in 2004.

Osmeña, former governor of Cebu, said the results of the recent Pulse Asia Inc. survey showed Roco was a formidable candidate because he remained on top despite his limited exposure in the Visayas and Mindanao.

This, compared to Mr Macapagal, who has been "campaigning almost every day" in the provinces, or Poe, who is very popular because of his being "the King" of Philippine movies, he said.

"Our camp still expects us to...government of Roco's standing by the time we operate in the Visayas and Mindanao," Osmeña said.

He said he saw no problem for Roco in Lacson because the latter had consistently topped all popularity surveys done.

Osmeña said Roco had the support of Lacson's A, B and C and the youth, which, he said, would bring their candidate to the presidency.

"These people are really supporters not because of anything else but they believe in the competence and integrity of Mr. Roco. They cannot be bought," he added.

Stand-offish

Osmeña is expected to be mentioned as Roco's running mate in tomorrow's convention of Pwg. Sen. But the ex-governor who was linked to Jun Ent for the country's top two posts, said he had yet to decide on the matter.

Orlando Beltran, former representative of Bayan Muna and now national chair of the political party Anakpawis, said Roco might not win the presidency despite consistently topping the surveys.

Beltran said Roco's supposed "stand-offish" stance and his opposition on US foreign policy would not serve him to good stead.

"Roco appears to have the qualities that would make for a credible executive. His opposition to the national blueprint for the exercise of corruption by members of the Department of Education," Beltran said.

Still to decide

The Liberal Party will decide on Sen. S Ramon Revilla and Mr Macapagal.

Senate President Franklin Drilon, newly designated LP chair, said at a news conference that the party's National Executive Council (NEC) would not be conducive on the selection process next week.

Senator Rep. Florencio Abad, LP president, and the names of Mr Macapagal and Roco were mentioned at the NEC meeting yesterday.

Abad disclosed that the party had been holding "private meetings with the President to discuss certain issues. He said it was Representative Benigno "Benjing" Aquino III and Ilok Gov. who suggested that the party do so once with them.

He added that the NEC-Congressional reinvestors would discuss with the presidential candidates their platforms of government, policies on coalitions and attitude toward the LP.

Other issues for discussion, according to Sen. Francis Pangilinan, are their stand on the Marcos wealth, Charter change and Estrada's pardon case. Reports from Christine O. Avendaño, Dona Pazdiagan, Maryjean C. Ortiz and Norman Bordadora in Manila, Reuters, Agence-France, PDI Visayas Bureau

BUSINESS

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Peace and order remains top concern

By Michelle V. Rama

THE LOCAL business community has presented to President Macapagal-Arroyo 10 resolutions that it considered as the major areas of development that the new administration should focus on to improve the economy.

These included suggestions in the fields of peace and order, governance, infrastructure, legislation for business development, credit and financing, environment, human capital, trade policy and negotiations, industry, and other cross-cutting issues.

The resolutions, which were formed from deliberations by representatives of the business sector, were presented to the President yesterday during the closing of the annual Philippine Business Conference.

On the area of peace and order, local businessmen said insurgency in Mindanao as well as the rise of terrorist activities from armed bandit groups like the Abu Sayyaf have been a major drag in the efforts of both the government and the private sector to encourage foreign investments.

The business leaders proposed for the creation of a standing committee that would focus on crafting programs to counter business opportunities and employment in conflict areas, and therefore peace and order.

The President, addressing the businessmen, said she has responded to the call for an improved peace and order situation by making the problem one of the focuses of her administration's efforts.

She said her administration has put up a P500-million fund to reward for people who will be of help in the government's efforts to arrest kidnappers.

In the area of legislation, the business sector has pushed for the immediate passage of bills to improvement of laws that will deal with SME development and that will amend the labor code. Other key legislation the sector wanted the government to pursue emphasis on were the Electric Power Reform Act, the Clean Air Act and the Domestic Shipping Development Act.

In the area of human capital, the business leaders wanted the government to improve the education system, especially the worldwide's English proficiency, which has been raised by investors particularly in the outsourcing business as primary consideration in hiring employees.

Other issues the business community brought to the President included the development of the mining sector, care for the environment and the problem on the rising population.

PLDT: Formidable force in telecom

By Abigail L. Ho

(Last of two parts)

AT THE HEIGHT of the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd. came into the picture, bringing into PLDT a new breed of leadership and a new culture.

FEATURE

On Nov. 24, 1998, First Pacific acquired a 37.2-percent stake in PLDT for P29.7 billion.

First Pacific executive Manuel Pangilinan replaced Ecuplan as president and he later assumed the position of chairman of the board in the company.

PRESIDENT Macapagal presents to Lucio Lorcio Tan the Most Outstanding Member of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry Award during the closing ceremonies of the 25th Philippine Business Conference and Exhibition at the Manila Hotel. Looking on (from left) are Miguel Varela (party lobbier), PCCI president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. (second from right), and PCCI vice president Peter Favila.

Fernando had a way

SPEAKING for a large majority of Filipinos, I say that we tried hard to stop our kids from getting their ears pierced in the name of Ferdinand's fakeaway, or for that matter, any silly or just sh*t-brained nonsense any-ang.

But after all our sacrifices, the peso just pooped on all close ass-kampo ears against the U.S. dollar, and what was more, the stock market went south.

And market analysts blamed everything on the announcement of Fernando Poe Jr., a.k.a. FP "Da King" J., that he would run for President.

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

Area of the Republic

What was it, really, in the news about the country's most popular movie actor's candidacy which spooked the financial markets—his long sideburns?

* * *

ANYWAY, even if the length of Poe's sideburns was just average, the markets would have still reacted similarly. Meaning, negatively!

That was also the reaction to the news that Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho was resigning, although he quoted closer sideburns.

Such a reaction was just to be expected, because even before Poe made the announcement, some groups already launched a partisan campaign against him.

We already heard things like he was born in Hawaii, he was a high school dropout, and he never even bothered to make a single movie with Ricky Aquino.

* * *

FORGOTTABBED, the guy was just an actor! He was nonsane judges! Play nansane one hours but You know—we were not supposed to think highly of Poe.

But come to think of it, something was implied underneath each pantheon lines. And that was, well, a sense of superiority. Or even superiority.

Deep inside we must see ourselves as superior to somebody whom we call "baba" or "jologs," and for that matter, any other pre-dorsal lines.

But are we really that superior to Poe? Hmm. Based on acidote website, as far about him, the character of the man seems reasonable.

* * *

INVESTMENT in the financial markets know-that, among all the people in the whole wide world, Poe was the closest ever to the late **Ismael Bautista First Band.**

Everybody believed that, during the happy days (and nights) of **Ismael Band in the Palace**, characters like Mark Jimenez (not his real name) made tons of money.

But nothing of such nature even remotely was ever said, rumored or speculated about the man to whom Ismael Band could not—NEVER—say "no!"

Although he campaigned hard for Ismael Band, perhaps harder than any of the legions of hangers-on, Poe never asked Ismael Band for

BREAKTIME 2

PLDT launches Ninoy Aquino Touch Card

PLDT launches the special edition Ninoy Aquino Touch Card in celebration of PLDT's 75th Anniversary and in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of Ninoy Aquino's heroism.

For every purchase of the special edition Ninoy Aquino Touch Card, a donation is given to the Benigno S. Aquino Jr., Foundation to help fund the various programs, services and activities of the foundation such as scholarship grants and livelihood projects in order to perpetuate the legacy of Ninoy for future generations to appreciate and draw inspiration from.

The special edition card guarantees you low NDD rate of P3 per minute. It comes in P100 denomination and this can be purchased from the PLDT Business Offices and Authorized PLDT prepaid card dealers and agents nationwide.

RP-Korea air talks collapse

MANILA CITY—The Philippines-Korea air negotiations held here last Thursday afternoon collapsed after the two panels failed to agree on some major issues including the system for flight entitlements for the Philippines.

In a joint statement, the Department of Transportation and Communications yesterday confirmed the stalemate.

"Earnest efforts on the part of both delegations to bridge these differences proved unsuccessful. Both parties agreed to terminate the air talks in order to study the various proposals more thoroughly," the statement said.

One of the main points of disagreement was the Philippine panel's proposal to change the basis for determining the entitlements in the air routes between the two countries from the number of flights to seats so that the exchange would be fair.

The Philippine panel, led by DOTC Undersecretary Edward Hiram, said it wants to have more seats than the Philippine counterparts, thus, using flights as a basis would be unfair.

But the Korean panel, led by Gou Bon Hwan, director of the Ministry of Construction and Transportation, did not agree to the Philippines' proposal saying that the Korean panel had no mandate to change the present set-up for the entitlements.

Hwan said the Korean panel insisted on the status quo.

A local daily quoted Enrico Mendoza, executive director of the Civil Aeronautics Board, as saying the Philippine panel also insisted on flight entitlements for Davao, considering the increasing number of Koreans visiting Southern Mindanao.

Anthony J. Alfeda, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Breaktime

Please see page B12

very former thinking bird.

* * *

MARCOS actions did, and in fact, even former presidents and even a former president did. But just fished away from the scene after the campaign. I thought it was something.

Also on the day the votes on his candidacy came out, the business pro ran an article on him, mainly based on previous articles on the scene, such as one in 2002.

Again, that was in 1995, some eight years ago, where nobody even had a germ of a thought that, someday, Pen would be running for public office.

What I am saying is, those articles were not meant to promote Pen's political plans. You, as we all know, all of the other politicians are soon to do, and more.

* * *

BASED on the article, Pen dropped out soon after his father died, and I wonder how many of those pandemic analysts had the guts to do the same.

If he started to work at a young age of 14 years, I say that the man must have gone through a lot of hardship. He must have known what it had been like to be poor.

He must have worked hard to get to luxury. He has succeeded, and succeeded on his own, as he has become a billionaire, without using any political connection.

I cannot say the same about our bigshot businessmen, including all of the present taipans. Somehow there was political connection in their luxury.

Moreover, but a single president of ours, from the former ones and to the present, even including Wide Band, can ever claim these things. They grew up comfortably.

* * *

JUST as an indication of how respected Pen is, well, even among those in the intrigue-plagued, envy-driven home industry, comedian Dolphy is said to be willing to join the campaign trail for him.

That never happened before. Dolphy never involved himself in politics. He also did not campaign for Wide Band or for any other action-oriented politicians.

Something in Pen earned him the respect of people. He must have a way with people. What's that—Fernando had a way?

Anyway, it must be something which is lacking in the others, say the chairmen of our previous (oops) double politicians.

We the pandemic campaign tagged him as having no experience in politics, although he ran his own multimillion-peso businesses, which made him more experienced than the widow Cory aquino, her ministers and we survived The Cory.

* * *

AND so, what spooked the financial markets, as known yet, when made Pen release his candidacy?

I guess it was because nobody in the local and international financial scene really knows him that well.

Look, when he declared his candidacy at the Manila Hotel, he was surrounded by a lot of unknowns in the political and business arena.

The only political personality there was Sen. Marcos Sotto III, a.k.a. Tito, who also was the lucky (but shy) choice he was accompanied by Vic and Loey.

* * *

POE could have worked on his credibility from the start, as his imported counterparts did, the likes of Arnold Schwarzenegger or Schwarzenegger.

Which Schwarzenegger, famous for the movie role of "Terminator," ran for governor of California, he also became a pandemic target as the "Governator."

From the start, therefore, he announced a whole array of experts who were helping him, including the investment guru Warren Buffet.

And California, mind you, is the fifth largest economy in the world. Meaning, it is hundreds of times bigger than the Philippine economy.

* * *

OR take Brazil which, like the Philippines, is going through rough times because of worries in the financial markets over its huge, impossible-to-meet debts.

In the most recent elections in Brazil, the markets also panicked. Believed riot about to win Lands down was a radical opposition. Again, PANIC!

Immediately, the candidate announced his economic program. It turned out to be no different from the one of the ruling party, which was doing all the pandemic.

Moreover, as the campaign materials, it became clear that the supposedly RADICAL candidate had the popular to back up the program of minimal sacrifice.

* * *

AND so, Pen. If you are listening, I think it was not your character which the markets hated, but rather it was the deadly silence on your plans and vision.

Not that matter, I guess all of our candidates must come out with their own economic reform programs. I mean, not just Pen, okay?

At least we have something to judge them by here, when nothing may happen to us again, just like under the Cory administration or Ghobachev.

Definitely, each of the one sponsored by the PCCI are good. The candidates can voice out their plans.

But as always, political debates are just like showbiz. Whatever they say there are forgotten after three months and 17 days. Let's have something in writing please.

APPLICATION FOR IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

(Page B12)

BSP says forex reserve still at $16B

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday said that the gross international reserves remained above $16 billion as of November 27, speculation that it had been tapping into the country's modest dollar arsenal to prop up the peso.

"The GIR is still above $16 billion this month. We would end the year with $16 billion," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said.

Another central bank official said the GIR in November was "looking good" and might even beat this year's highest level of $16.99 billion recorded in October, following the inflow of $1.1 billion from government-owned PNOC-Exploration.

BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr., however, believed that the dollar reserves this month could not extend the October level.

Traders said the central bank had been using the external reserves, excessively in the last two weeks to defend the peso by selling huge amounts of dollars in the spot market although the BSP had also been buying dollars during quiet periods for the peso.

The BSP intervention, they said, had been ranging from $10 million to $30 million in the last two weeks to avert an exaggerated depreciation of the peso. The local currency had plunged to its lowest at 55.35 to a dollar last Thursday following the announcement of Fernando Poe Jr.'s presidential bid.

This month, the government is projected another $250 million in the BSP vaults from the proceeds of a three-year bond sale, the forexwatchers said the BSP and the government had also been settling their outstanding obligations.

Buenaventura's wise hoping that the government would complete this year its remaining $900-million financing requirement for 2003 for some political events had made the cost of Philippine borrowings more expensive.

Spreads on Philippine dollar bonds had widened by almost 100 basis points since Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho announced his resignation last Nov. 21.

The true level of the external reserves is important to the policymakers of the financial markets. A declining GIR usually puts pressure on the peso as it implies the residents of the central bank to defend the local currency against speculators.

At $15.89 billion in October, the country's net foreign dollars reserves for only seven years, despite being placed on downgrade review by Moody's Investors Service this week.

"It has been cut 100% [requests for proposals] to $5 adding [to] pressure on the financing," a banking source quoted by Reuters in Hong Kong said, adding the deadline was Dec. 5.

Another banking source said Napocor had asked banks how much it could raise in the first quarter of next year. The utility firm needs $1.2 billion to $1.5 billion to fund its operations and pay-maturing debt in 2004.

The move came after global ratings agency Moody's had placed the country and Napocor's ratings on review for possible downgrade this week.

Moody's cited rising political risks and worries that the fiscal situation in the country would deteriorate ahead of presidential election bid next May.

Markets have also been unnerved by the candidacy of local movie star Fernando Poe Jr. who announced on Wednesday he would run for the presidency. Poe lacks political or economic experience but has the popularity to give a strong challenger to President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Last week's announcement of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho's resignation has also caused jitters in the markets.

But Standard & Poor's said on Friday Camacho's resignation had no direct impact on the Philippines' sovereign ratings.

The Philippines is expected to hold a conference call with fund investor investors on Monday to allay their concerns following Camacho's resignation. The call is being arranged by Credit Suisse First Boston. Reuters

Napocor seeks proposals for dollar bond issue

THE GAM-STAMPED National Power Corp. (Napocor) has ordered banks for dollar bond issue proposals for early next year, despite being placed on downgrade review by Moody's Investors Service this week.

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PLDT: Formidable force in telecom

Pangilinan's convergence vision paved the way for listeners to customize its businesses after three landlines.

While PLDT already had a cellular phone business as early as 1991, Pangilinan's convergence vision as of the end of the third quarter, is now the country's biggest cellular service provider.

PLDT is also investing heavily in information and communications technology, with the creation of ICT arm ePLDT. The company has also dabbled into broadcasting through Philippine Multimedia Holdings Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of the PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund.

Mediacast has under it radio network Nation Broadcasting Corp., the local version of MTV and second largest cable operator Philippine Home Cable Holdings Inc.

PLDT through Mediacast, also almost acquired a controlling stake in second largest broadband network GMA Network Inc. in 2001, but the sale did not push through.

Pangilinan, however, never had the fact that he would love to have a TV network under PLDT. With landlines, mobile phones, Internet, content, IT solutions, a cable firm, a movie channel and a radio network now all within the PLDT group, a TV station would certainly be icing on the cake.

Aborted hostile takeover

But just when things were starting to look all rosy for the country's dominant carrier, Pangilinan had to face one of the biggest corporate dramas in Philippine history when the Gokongwei group attempted to takeover a controlling stake in PLDT last year.

First Pacific principals, the Sy-Coronas, who owned PLDT rival Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc.

See to be ideological foe like that, Pangilinan and Ayala, backed by the PLDT board of directors, thwarted the takeover attempt by refusing to allow the Gokongwei to conduct a due-diligence audit on the firm.

They reasoned that it would not be fair to the company's shareholders to allow competitors to see the company's books, including some of its trade secrets. Also, the board invoked the provision in the PLDT by-laws, which stated that no competitor could sit on the PLDT board.

History then repeated itself for Gokongwei as he came back with the San Miguel Corp. board of directors used in 1976 to thwart his entry into the company's board became one of the strongest defenses that the PLDT board used against him more than two decades later.

The melodramatic period of three offer for a majority stake in PLDT lapsed on Sept. 30, 2002, without the Gokongwei group being given to the company's books.

Moving forward

More than a year later, PLDT has become an even more formidable force in the telecommunications industry. Buoyed by Smart's sterling performance these past quarters, PLDT has become one of the country's most profitable firms.

Pangilinan envisions an even stronger PLDT both in profits and management, in the years to come. While concentrating on achieving this, however, he has also set his sights on some new grounds to tread.

By the first quarter of next year, PLDT would be looking at its ninth president in more than seven decades. Pangilinan said that he would be taking the place of Smart's Napoleon Nazareno would sit as president.

Anyhoy, Pangilinan said, had decided to focus his attention on his newly acquired broadcasting firm Mediacast Broadcasting Corp.

While no formal announcements have really been made, an internal memo is already circulating around the company, informing them of Pangilinan's eventual resignation as PLDT president and chief executive.

All these are taking place while the company is continuing to achieve significant milestones. At 73, PLDT has been through a lot. It has endured a world war, the Asian financial crisis, a corporate takeover attempt and five different presidents.

There are surely more exciting things in store for the company in the future. As the saw things are going, this 73-year-old firm looks as if it can take on anything that will come its way.

Group backs tariff on imported cement

THE DECISION of Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II to maintain the current tariff on cement imports has drawn another support, this time from a multisectoral group.

In a letter to Roxas, the 120-member Alliance for Consumer Protection (ACP) urged the trade chief to resist pressure from lawmakers and businessmen who want the tariff on cement imports reduced from the current 30 percent to 5 percent.

ACP is a multisectoral non-government organization (NGO) with thousands of partners in industry, services and agriculture. It is among the few in the country who are members of Consumer International (CI), the latter having a consultative status with the United Nations.

"We, industries are support to you for maintaining the current tariff on cement imports, without which the local cement industry may collapse given the excess capacity in the region," said Raul E. Segovia, chair of the ACP.

Segovia also urged Roxas to keep the current tariff intended on cement as the cornerstone and thousands of workers in the industry will reap the short- and long-term benefits of such decision.

"We strongly believe these are short-term and long-term benefits resulting from your decision to defend local industries from unfair trade," Segovia stressed.

Since the imposition of a P20.00 protective tariff per 40-kg bag of imported cement, local cement prices have decreased by 17.7 percent based on the latest data from the National Statistics Office (NSO).

THE PHILIPPINE SOCIETY OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY-HEAD AND NECK SURGERY, INC.

47TH ANNUAL CONVENTION, November 29-December 2, 2003

The Westin Philippine Plaza, CCP Complex, Manila

THEME: CURRENT STANDARDS IN ENT-HNS PRACTICE

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Philippine Society of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery to welcome the delegates to our 47th Annual Convention. This year's convention theme, "Current Standards in ENT-HNS Practice", gives all of us, the opportunity to contribute to the advancement of our specialty in upholding the quality and standards of our health care delivery and renew our friendship among colleagues and guests.

I would like to thank and congratulate this year's Convention Chairman Dr. Nardy Cellan, and the organizing committee, for preparing a very innovative and comprehensive scientific program, as well as function and entertaining social and sports programs.

We, at the PSO-HNS, are also grateful to our friends in the pharmaceutical industry and other benefactors, who have always been with the PSO-HNS in all our endeavors, for having immensely contributed to the success of our convention.

Once again, welcome! Welcome and welcome to the PSO-HNS!

CESAR V. VILLAFUERTE, JR., MD, MHA
President, PSO-HNS

Colleagues and friends! It is with very great pleasure to welcome you all to our annual year Christmas Convention. I am sure that everybody has been enjoying the beauty of this craft-based tradition that has, through the years, come to mean many different things for us. Oktoberpoggahan. We have always brought home with us a treasure trove of fond memories and relevant learnings from these annual gatherings. The well-planned Scientific and Social menu laid out for us each year has always been the talk among the fiesta. Let me be the first to assure you that this year's convention committee has amassed good and hard to set the stage for another memorable meeting – the rest is up to you!

JESUS RANDY O. CUÑAL, MD
Chair, 47 Chair
47th Annual Convention
Organizing Committee

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SATURDAY Super

A DECADE OF KICK. Happy 10th, MJ!

Tim Yap

NEW KICK!

Photos by Wimi Manzanares

JUMO Lloyd Cruz is a rocker, front
row.

The image that sticks to my
head as I recall the MJ Kick
Awards 2003 is that of stylish chit
chatting with rock legend Joey
"Pepe" Smith while soap star
Anita Linda Cruz was asking for
his autograph.

Of course, there were other
"high" lights—Adylene Clarice in
her "barely" there top hugging
goddess of the year; her beau Ian
Cruz; and diane Formela kissing
babes tandem Jeri Basaylo and
Kristine Hermosa.

KICK, P2

KICK PARTY PALS. Scenesters Xeng Zubiaga of Blu Dimension with 'it' actor Kiko Rocco at the VIP area

BOOZE BUZZ. Here's to more Red Horse

GIRLS OF THE SAMI FEATHER. A rare moment with Aiwin, Nonie and Daddy Hosaka after the MJ Rock Awards

STOLEN kiss from our favorites Jessanae Riddle Boy Escudero

I WANNA ROCK! Indian actor Taha with Yuparaaz

JUST pull it...says Mell

ARTIST Jose Pablo unguentoc

KING of the underground Ronald Pasion

LYRICS Karen Kusserow!

THE NU 107 ROCK AWARDS VIP AREA

NEW ROCK!

MUSIC'S MUSE. Mylene Dizon exudes rock-and-roll sensuality

Michelle Bayle (shades of Madonna and Britney swapping attire!) and all the other guests who had overdosed on Red Horse flew. Thank God for strict security (Mr. Bodi's new matter manager Chris Hernandez who employed over a hundred police enforcers) that everything went smooth as a newly polished bass guitar.

The VIP social area was filled with rockers, rocker wannabes (that's me) and groupies who were all there to bid farewell to the scene of that thing that Atom Araullo has posed he—and Bot is, hard core, unadulterated rock.

My point with the John Lloyd rocker thing is not to put him down as a rock lover...anyone remotely connected to the music biz knows—as a counterculture that transcends date boundaries. Who cares if you are sexy or jologs? Where it comes to rock, the consensus denominator is the love for the music, and nothing else.

So after a decade of redefining Pinoy radio, NU makes an

MAGIC moment with Marina Magsipoc

DWWARD to the next ten years...

FROM BEHIND THE STEPS. The celebrations of the NU Rock Awards' first decade was a blast!

And the winners are...

1. BEST NEW ARTIST - Sugar Free
2. BAND OF THE YEAR - Parokya Ni Edgar
3. SONG OF THE YEAR - "Soul Searching" by Urbandub
4. ALBUM OF THE YEAR - "Sa Wakas" by Sugarfree
5. BEST MUSIC VIDEO - "Daisy" by 7 Foot Jx (Directed by Pedring Lopez & Kiko Pe
6. BEST ALBUM PACKAGING - "Parnaso Ng Papuso" - by Pan ; designed by Ulysses Velasco
7. VOCALIST OF THE YEAR - Kevin Ray (Razorback)
8. GUITARIST OF THE YEAR - Ira Cruz (Kapatid)
9. BASSIST OF THE YEAR - Rommel Dela Cruz (Barbie's Cradle)
10. DRUMMER OF THE YEAR - Allan Bardinas (Kamikazee)
11. PRODUCER OF THE YEAR - Barbie's Cradle & Angee Bazal for "Playing In The Fields" by BArbie's Cradle
12. LISTENERS CHOICE AWARD - Kamikazee
13. RAW AWARD - Nerds
14. HALL OF FAME AWARD - Eraserheads

A horse with a name

JUST pull it, Jamie says. "Then, what is Joey?"

Dear Man About Town,
I have a problem that I hope you can help me with. All my troubles began when my mother named me after a horse. She should have known that things would never go smoothly for a person named after a horse. I'm only 23 but already I feel like I'm going through a midlife crisis. How do I keep it together?

Man about town
Chuck Dy

I AM frequently asked whether the questions featured here are real or contrived. I must admit that my capacity for fiction is, in this case, insufficient, low to the darkest corners of my fermented imagination could I have concocted of this fantastic inquiry. Truth is not only stranger than fiction; it's also a lot more amusing.

The problem requires detailed attention and a subtle (no pun intended) sense of view though I must say it is difficult to be specific because your issue is very vague. I know next to nothing about you outside of your age and regular gumdrop.

What is your name, anyway? The generic "hoss," "pony," or "bahaw" would be dire, indeed, since it relegates your destiny to the realm of limbo (unrefined, too). It would be backwarding, I imagine, if you were named after a famous horse, maybe one that starred in a classic film, or a venerable racehorse. Okay so maybe Black Beauty or Man O'War wouldn't make the best names in job application forms, but at least they hold a sense of history and recognition in your chosen field. The worst case scenario would have you named after a horse in Baguio or Tagaytay, because then they have really appalling names, and become someone out there is riding the inspiration behind your name-horse right now.

But maybe the genetic factor is to your favor. Double standards extend to even this remote realm. Men named after animals are likely to suffer less, possibly due to the fact that they identify with the primal earth more than their female counterparts. Being named Fabian or Hosea may even be advantageous for a man, as these names promote the illusion of virility. A woman, on the other hand, may have to endure the cruelest social ridicule and feel all manner of bile "choosing you over" (Your mother is a hotel?) or "by" (a liberal?" (Hey, who's on liberal?)

Before I allow my pens to gallop away into the fields of shallow humor, let's take it in, shall we? Filipino privilege and delight in verbal gymnastics as a matter of course. We abbreviate, we acronymize, we append syllables, we hyphenate, we allude to phrases, we mutilate to malapropisms. Nothing and no one is spared this, from the high-an-ranking officers of Church and State, to the humblest corner, inner recess in the province. We give pasalubong and salubong and then we can be comfortable with, but right and but cold than the formal versions). Who would ever feel threatened by a Ate Jess or a Kuya Boy? Once in a while, a person with a history of narcotic abuse gets carried away and the child's cousin cuts off the high way at frivolous imagination, down to the garter of utter nonsense. Desperate with socially acceptable names (saw this wardrobe wardrobe, saddened has relieved parents their own parents more order upon their christening.

Short of legally changing your name, which is a bureaucratic nightmare, there isn't much you can do except learn to live with it. Consider that most Filipino have awkward names, anyway. Earlier the birth certificates of 10 of your friends and I guarantee that five of them will have first names that sound like Twinkie Balls being chewed on, which is why an overwhelming majority of Filipinos would rather go by their middle names. Why not just meld yourself with a, oh, get name? Mesiting Bally? Buffalo Bello?

And what about the incredible opportunity to share and be remembered by, possibly because of your name? "Hello, I was named after a horse." "What an ice! Break-ed Raw suggestions! Whenever what the real reasons were behind your weight-ning? Mama's secret rules of high adventure and sweeping romance, intense as epic fairy tale of despair and salvation. Tell the script to Vic Sotto and call it "Gone With the Whatever, and Me."

And how about all those great stories of endowment you can exchange with My Ed ... I mean Mr Right? You can call him Cowboy and he can reciprocate with My Little Pony. He can tell you he's a stallion, and you can surprise him by revealing that yours is Honey. He can pick you flowers, and you can eat them.

Enter Sue. Twenty-three is a great age to be—what's that in horse years? I understand it must have been great fun a challenge guessing up with a present for, given that children and adolescents can be so cruel, but now it's time to use your name to your advantage. I know dozens of people named after fruits, flowers, inanimate objects and yes, livestock, but it didn't stop them from enjoying life to the fullest. You might also consider that you could have been named after a mass murderer or a sexless (any species) person for all the Bridon our Sheets. Your name is not as important as what you do with it, as in a good person, live well, and cross the finish line with head held high. I'm betting on you.

(email author at bdumasmanila@yahoo.com)

SATURDAY Super

Who wants to be an artista?

By Lisa Cayetano
Contributor

Opportunities in our society are so few and far between, that hoping to significantly advance in life via traditional careers often seems unrealistic. Being a movie star appears to be the perfect alternative

FROM an early age we are exposed to the unique Filipino "show biz" culture. Singing, dancing and putting on a show is second nature to Filipinos, and a musical program is a logical part of almost any kind of gathering, whether it's in our homes, barangays, or welcoming a foreign guest in Malacañang.

But a belonging to our "entertainment culture" is enough motivation for so many to aspire to be artistas,or are there other reasons that the show biz world and the outcasts of the artista have been elevated to their present status in Philippine society....so?Successful, admired and rewarded?

Being an artista is the Filipino version of the "American dream."

Opportunities in our society are so few and far between, that hoping to significantly advance in life by pursuing more traditional careers often seems unrealistic. Being an artista appears to be the perfect alternative, or rather, the perfect path.

The life of an artista is perceived to be one of wealth, comfort and happiness, surrounded by beautiful people and scrumptious fun. Its we-are-artistic glamorographs, and luminous information about the show biz world. Often, we know more about artista fun than about our national heroes.

But how many real contemporary Filipino success stories do we hear about? The two kinds most often publicized are stories of artistas and politicos. The magical life of the artista, no matter how badly tinged with intrigue, is still more generally accepted and loved than that of the politico whom would is perceived as one of deceit, danger and corruption as opposed to the artista's world of beauty, fame and fortune.

Even the world of the politico has been invaded by the artista. In fact, and it is becoming clearer by the day that their paths are now convergent. Politicos have also tried to enter show biz to advance their careers. A politico's attempt to enter show business often has less to do with competence as a public servant than with gaining credibility. But what about the artista who enters politics?

Artista, as understood by millions of dreamers, means something more complex than its literal translation, "artist." The word comes closer to "renaissance artist" in the sense that, more than mere creation and interpretation of art, it connotes social and civic responsibility. This is a heavy load to carry for one whose initial purpose in entering the business may have been limited to earning money and being famous.

Whether they accept it or not, Pinoy artistas have become much more than entertainers: they are now seen by many as leaders, heroes, even saviors! The show biz stage is now used not just by those who wish to entertain, but also by those who want to be heard.

Thus, the world of the artista now requires just as much hard work, sweat and tears to excel as most other competitive fields. There are many hurdles, and success is never guaranteed. The rewards, as much as the expectations, we confer on the artista are often not only undeserved, but unfair. Putting that much pressure on the success of society darnel's only cause an imbalance that is unhealthy, but also hinders that sector from reaching its true potential. When our show biz industry's and artistas' objectives are clouded, and expectations of them modified, their output is compromised and we lose one of society's strongest assets.

Lisa Cayetano is the director of GMA 7's Startstruck.

OF PAGEANTS and friendships...

WINNING SPIRIT. Raya with Denise Dominguez.

ELITIST LOOKS. Miss Siam Laura Dominguez, back, flies celebrators.

RAYA backstage with beauties Pernilla Lindner of Sweden and Christel Petersen of Denmark after the pageant

Raya reigns

Hailed by local directors as one of the most promising ramp divas, many have urged her to try out the international scene. She recently did just that.

THE COUNTRY'S COLORS. Raya Manangpo is Elite Model Look Miss Philippines 2003

RAYA leads the runway romp

DOES Elite prefer blondes?

HER MENTORS. Parents Mike and Robert Manangpo with director Ariel Lozada

BACKSTAGE PASS. Behind the scenes at the Elite Model Look 2003 held in Singapore

Text and photos by Tim Yap

"MISS Philippines—Raya Manangpo!"

My heart skipped a beat as host David Wu announced her name. Raya walked down the Takapuna runway along with 63 other contestants from all over the world. So, this wasn't Miss Universe, but close—the most prestigious modeling pageant in the world, the Elite Model Look, held a few weeks ago at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.

The season for this unpredictable teen, I saw this girl grow up. From being a teen talk columnist fave at the Summit's 20s section and our childhood dreams days as Rampstar Philippines 8 watched her as one of Mikey Keller's friends in "The Monster Movie," among others, I saw her blossom into a fine young lady.

Before leaving for Singapore, I was told the other Mowry by Nanet's photos and found out that he is a young runner with, who else but, supermodel Claudia Schiffer, who was visiting Manila at that time upon the invitation of Virgil Ramos. Little did Raya know that she too, was poised for modeling superstardom.

Shifted by our local directors as one of the most promising young divas (if not the most), in the local scene, many have urged her to try the international scene. Truth this month when she left as Miss Philippines Elite, she did just that... and she did our country proud.

Runway Raya

Even during the press conference for all the Elite candidates, the media was very impressed with Raya, and told her she had the best catwalk. This did not escape the show's directors, who placed Raya on center stage during the show pieces. She was always ready to walk ahead of all the candidates (who were all 18, 19 and 20 years old). Patricia Ann, child labor lawmakers!). In the modeling scene, she drew spouse a the star!

Okay, granted that she didn't take the top photo—Miss Slovakia Jessica Dominova, 18 years old and 1.81 cm (5'11") tall did that, making the Elite contract worth $150,000. But Raya looked every bit a winner. The runway! She had a good attitude.

The friends she made during the pageant—Miss Sweden 14-year-old Fredrika Lindner, and Miss Denmark, Christel Winther Petersen, who is 16, were first and second runner up. All these winners were blondes. Predictable. "It's the icy look that's popular these days—I think that's why they won," said

RUNWAY QUEEN. Raya Manangpo reigns on the ramp

RAYA with her proud parents Mike and Robert Manangpo

so Asian supermodel who I spoke to during the after party at Singapore hotspot Velvet Underground.

Anyway, backstage after the 14 finalists were announced, some girls cried, some girls threw tantrums...Raya remained calm and posed with her friends who made it to the finals. I remember that Raya seemed to be a year younger.

There was a time when backstage stories. A top Elite official asked one girl to call the others from their rooms, and she responded with a curt, "No, I don't like." Which of course took her out of the list. And there was this other girl who freaked everyone else from the group before. Ah, girls and pageants!

Gucci and Chanel

The star-studded evening saw featured past winners—Miss Slovenia Tanja Vrvar spot in skimpy Dolce and Gabbana, Linda Vojtova and Ines Miholevic, as well as many supermodel Opal (don't ask me to pronounce her name!)...in the sexy Chanel! Or Irish Tea and our very own Amanda Griffin were onstage to talk about life in general, with host Ashley Scott, who is what, her Hollywood status.

The Elite Model Look 2003 finals show spotlighted an audience of 6,000. The Philippine delegation was composed of yours truly, Raya's proud parents Robert and Mikki Manangpo, Indian-Norway Ariel Lozada, PR king Edd Fuentes and the group of Pickled and Pinoy (the brand that Raya endorses—check out our new Elite billboards—Ronald Pineda and Alex Tesoro and their friends Jerry Buenaventura, Joseph Mabesa (Singapore's man about town and buddy Bernard Fuentebella, both of them Pinoys living, Procter and Gamble in the Lion City, young aspiring designer Bada Lagos and Mac Reyes).

The day after the pageant, we decided to see the city and Raya's Chanel bag as our natural thing for "retail-ranga" is parading on the ramp...as orders of Royal dress Zealand shoes and shopped away—from Takashimaya to Sentosa, we got lost in a fashion frenzy and indulged in gastronomic treats—something that put Singapore on the global chic list. In the middle of this, Singapore model workers would meet up with us and get Raya's set cards for possible projects.

Back in Manila, after doing the Gucci show, Rong Rong director Dennis Phang sees Raya and immediately took notice of her runway skills. He said wanted to book her for Chanel on the spot.

It's about time.

HIS MAKE-UP LOOK. Miss Singapore, China and Philippines work the runway after Denny

CALGARRIE'S model Abby and Singapore-made supermodel Brent Chua, who is Filipino

PARTYING with Channel [V] YJs Sarah Tse and Amanda Griffin

PINOY DELEGATION IN SINGAPORE. Miss Universe of Pickled and Pinoy Ariel Lozada, Andoy of ABS-CBN with Ronald Pineda of F&H and Jerry Buenaventura on the dance floor after the contest

"I'M STEERING." "Hello pizza, goodbye Atkins!

SATURDAY Super

[V]ixens

PRODUCED AND INTERVIEWED BY TIM YAP
TEXT BY MARTIN VALDEZ
PHOTOS BY STEVE TIRONA

MAKEUP BY XENG ZULUETA OF SHU UEMURA, CLOTHES BY CULT FEMME BY HENDY TANTOCO AND IVARLUSKI ASERON

SPECIAL THANKS TO TESSA PRIETO-VALDES FOR THE USE OF HER HOME AND ACCESSORIES

MODELS: CHANNEL [V] VJS CINDY KIMBERIDGE AND SARAH TAN

We live in a world dictated by media. What we see and what we hear directly influences what we feel and what we think we know. Most of what passes for media today cannot be considered nutritional brain food, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to discern between truth, propaganda and simple entertainment. But there is a small vanguard of entities in this industry, both behind and in front of the cameras, that are making it a little better for all of us on the underwater side of a television screen.

The instinct of Music Video channels—since dominated as freedom fetish with its bosses—has enabled hundreds of today's culture, has brought the Video Jockey (or VJ) into the forefront of a massive movement. He keeps simple vehicles for aging rock stars to discover their still-kicking artistic engines. But Music Video channel has emerged as a modern Rosetta Stone, interpreting music and trends in the context of yesterday like The VJ has become the prophet for the cult of pop culture. Channel [V] recognizes both the influence of this media outlet, and the importance of its spokespersons. To appreciate the nuances of a youthful audience, it is necessary to have one of them corresponding or three, and spending her time.

VJ Sarah Tan hopped on board Channel [V] last November and has never looked back, which is fortunate because if she did, she'd catch me starting. Grown was countless other young talents, this Singapore native is the latest addition to Singapore's little contribution to have hit the limelight as a Channel [V] VJ. Educated first in Singapore, Sarah then attended University in London, where she studied English Literature. She comes

Channel V GOES HAYWIRE THE CROUNG. Sarah in a diamond corset cap and Cindy in a corset/tail skirt went on a glove battle in Harbin Zanna

Mixens

VJ Sarah Tan

One thing about fame is...it can go as fast as it came.

The thing I love most about what I do is...travelling.

People might be surprised to know that I...am allergic to cats but I have two that sleep with me at home (I just love them so much I don't care).

I never told this before but I...watch Wheel of Fortune and try to guess the words.

The most important thing I've learned is...in this line of work, celebrity is something you're created.

I wish when I started off TV I knew told that...the concern with 10lbs.

The worst thing that ever happened to me was...when I was 16 years old, the coolest guy in school had a party and everybody was invited but me.

And what this taught me was...that being popular isn't important, and some exclusive I threw a friend party and didn't invite them!

The happiest moment of my life was...when I got my first paycheck because that was the moment I knew I wouldn't have to live at home with my parents for the rest of my life!

The secret to happiness is...being comfortable with yourself.

The best outfit consisted of...my new black corset dress from Bebe.

My perfect Saturday night consists of...my real sexy love letters, a bottle of wine, and a line-up of DVDs.

The soundtrack to my life would include...Courtney Green - "Santa Begins," "Red Hot Chili Peppers" "Under the Bridge," Edwyn

Michael's "I'll Be" and Eve Gee Dolls' "Sin."

If I was invisible for a day, I'd...cop down Orchard Road (the busiest road in Singapore) naked.

The thing that makes you most angry is...Jim Grace Service. If you have that much money why spend it on such an ugly robot?

If I was the most powerful person on Earth I'd...destroy all nuclear weapons.

To me weight is...how your body has the ability to heal itself even though you neck it around.

When I'm gone they'll probably say...she was a pig pig cow!

If money was no option I'd...buy my mom a country home in England.

When I retire I would like to...live on island a huge house with a big garden with lots of children and cats and no boss. Have found a husband who will make me laugh.

The world would be a much better place if...women were in power.

My hero is...lots to say parents.

The thing that makes my life worth living is...my family.

My greatest hope for the future is...to still love all my work when I reach that ripe old age.

VJ Cindy Burbridge

The thing about fame is...it makes it a pain to keep the house, if you're in a pissy mood because people ex... post you in mids.

24/7.

The thing I love most about what I do is...not having to work in a vehicle.

People might be surprised to know that I...am the cleanest person on earth.

I never told this before but I...am terribly afraid of rats and worms.

The most important thing I've learned is...to trust my gut instinct.

I wish when I started off I'd been told that...there are some people that will envy you no matter what, and that you worry

piece of advice is always.

The worst thing that ever happened to me was...losing a good friend because of a mistake.

And what this taught me was...cherish the ones you have.

The happiest moment of my life was...not easy to pin down.

The secret to happiness is...being grateful for what you already have in life.

The best outfit consisted of...my favourite bikini and swim-suit running! I went on the beach from 'dusk' to 'dawn' to complete

tucked behind my ear).

My perfect Saturday night consists of...dinner and drinks, then dancing all night with my best mates.

The soundtrack to my life would include...Simply Red's "Stars In," Matchbox 20's "Unwell."

If I was invisible for a day, I'd...raid Madonna's closet.

The thing that makes you most angry is...people who abuse animals and children.

If I was the most powerful person on Earth I'd...make sure every person had a place to sleep at night, and a meal to eat AM.

friend! Such a lovely queen woman, but oh well, I

To me weight is...the amount we people can't each other even and think out laughing for no one freaks reason.

When I'm gone they'll probably say...what didn't she do!

If money was no option I'd...have a house in every country and a few yachts, and what a wardrobe!

When I retire I would like to...have an herb garden and bake for my fifty grand children.

The world would be a much better place if...we could all just get along.

My hero is...mom, definitely.

The thing that makes my life worth living is...the people I love and who love me. Oh, and chocolate.

My greatest hope for the future is...living to a ripe old age and in health.

Sleight of hand

How to disappear, blissfully, on a weekend

By Martin Vulko

ONE night, many years ago, I sat underneath a midnight sky and composed the greatest love letter ever written. I was sitting in the middle of a pale field, alone except for my thoughts, reading the romantic masterpiece I had just penned. Less than a thousand words but infinite in emotion, it expressed every ounce of passion I could muster from my young soul—the organic division of adolescence, the frantic need for affection, years of steely devotion. This was the Gospel according to Love, a guaranteed knee-buckler that would have any woman who was literate swooning. Except ... I did not have anyone to give it to. Later, I was informed that there had been a brief meteor shower that night. I had not noticed.

A decade has passed since. Time, like a clumsy thief, has left a trail of memories and moral lessons that he dropped by the roadside in his haste to abscond with my youth. I look older and I certainly feel old, which tells me that I must be older. The other half of the matter is not as certain. I can only hope I am wiser as well. It has been a decade of growth and contemplation, of experimentation and solution, of success and disappointment. It has been 10 years of foraging through the jungle of life, searching for miracles and meaning, rebutting to sleep for fear of missing momentous events that will clarify everything. It has been a search for magic.

Magic is that which should not be explained, only experienced. When I witness acts of performance magic—card tricks, vanishing acts, escapes— the delight I feel is multiplied only by my sense of uncertainty as to how the magician pulled it off. But now that once I am privy to this information, once I know the mechanics of operating the illusion, the luster of the act still fades away. What was once magic will become simply a science that one man learns and another man doesn't. If David Blaine explained his phenomenal illusionary performances to a child after each show, we'd have everybody levitating across Metro Manila—still pissing on the sidewalk but from a higher trajectory.

That's not magic, just tragic.

But there are other forms of magic that are beyond the capabilities of a single man. In the realm of abstract experience we consider Life, Love, Nature, Truth, Happiness, and Hope as forms of magic. These are the enchanted concepts that inspire evolution and poetry, that pave the path of inter-soul exploration and composition of animal cells. This is magic that makes us human by allowing us kinship with inexplicable divinity. And this is the kind of magic I have been seeking, I am looking out for Big Magic, television-set nature, your love that will ignite the hearths, and events of astounding proportions. I wait with eagerness, because I know these will change my life, or give it meaning, or at least a general sense of direction.

Shared longing

Meeting people from all walks of life, from all the corners of this mad world, I have come to realize that we share a longing for magic. Whether they are backroad backpackers trekking down the slopes of virginal Pinatubo, or slippery businessmen navigating the hard-steel pockets of corporate America, everybody wants a piece of unadulterated pie. In Kenya, I met a man who fervently wished to escape to the United States and watch a live baseball game, particularly featuring the Chico Ruiz Effect. In Florida, I chanced upon some pilgrims trying to prepare me for my Retreat. I was desperately trying to apply for graduate school in Australia. We were torn from these continents bound by a mutual yearning for Big Magic.

It seems only logical that we search for Big Magic in big places, in locations and events that command attention and recall immediately to the surface of our memories. We imagine that in extraordinary circumstances—the larger the venue, the more populous the event, the more currencies are available, the more boosted the partying, the longer the duration—we will result in moments of euphoria and catharsis. This is the equation I lived my life by in the elusive search for magic. If I'm going to pull a big F**king t1056, I'm going to send a big F**king bar, right?

Most Filipinos would understand, I think. It is why we would rather leave for—use the magical, and the dramatic has always appealed to the Filipino. We are renowned for large-than-life characters, of distant lands shown with intricate nature, of events saturated with music and color. The way we admire actors as our diasporas search for magic can be found in our penchant for peaceful revolution. The apparent success of the first EDSA revolution spawned a questionable tradition of rushing to those same streets every time there is a social disturbance. It is a spectacle, to be sure, but doesn't another revolution mean that the last one didn't really work? We may wear the asphalt off our highways before that question is resolved.

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What if ...?

I can't say I've had much success in casting magic. But it is there, this I categorize as "a connection in my carriage," like the echo of an old song or the fleeting remnants of a dream. I am happy with my life; I just can't seem to pinpoint when and where this magic occurs. And then I recall an old story of Elijah the prophet, who failed to find God in extraordinary events, and instead found Him "in a still, small voice." I'm not as pious as I should be, but once in awhile the old Catholic training proves to be very convenient.

Perhaps I've been searching for magic with the wrong dimensions. I have failed to connect it to the possibility of an inverse relationship between magic and its three geographic. What if the extraordinary happened under the most ordinary and fleeting of circumstances? What if the moments that changed the world took place while no one noticed?

It must be so. Like Life—playing a simple of hand, meant torn into twilight in the hardest of moments, separated only by a few seconds of bleeding horizon. Social change starts with a single citizen influencing another, although the latter of movement cannot even be calculated. Friendship grows into love over a period of time, but the actual instinct of the emotion can be catalyzed by the most mundane of exchanges. It is in these little pockets, hidden in the folds of our everyday lives, that we discover the greatest surprises. If I am able to have this new perception, if I am able to develop sensitivity for these anonymous, ephemeral instants and seize the moment for all eternity, then I think I will attain magic.

A few months ago, I was with a good friend and we sat on the shores of an unpopulated beach in near darkness. As we contemplated, a shooting star tore through the frosted face of our like a golden scream in fire, and then disappeared. I was stunned into silence, but my friend had missed the whole thing. "That's okay," I consoled him, "you can catch the next one." Any second now ...

For comments, e-mail the author at laurapinsmail@yahoo.com

Solitaire trick

THESE days, two simple words never fail to frighten.

The brother of party animals and occasional drinking buddies utters automatons. "Open Bar." It always amazes me how a simple two-word message with three words becomes a virtual abracadabra that has otherwise perfect boyfriends running hide, nervous as monkeys. In fact, anyone running for public office could cut their vote-buying budget in half simply by pledging whole nights of free bottles periodically, starting now.

I should know. I am part of the Bedazzled path that subscribes to the will of Happy Hour. We, as I have learned in a past marketing class, I also know there is no such thing as a free lunch (or in this case, free booze). So as I grab my free swash, I am fully aware of my quite painful price, and that is having to deal with agonizing small talk. That is for me the most telling thing about having a nightlife but only sorry, the need to develop that little skill of talking to acquaintances who have this habit of asking the same freaking question every time I run into them.

Don't get me wrong, I do live up to my generalized Aquarian attributes of friendliness and sociability. Be sometimes, I prefer a simple "Hello, how are you?" to a futile attempt at conversation by the bar, akin to squeezing nuts from a stone. I really don't enjoy being interrogated repeatedly with platitudinous, backstayed questions. (And as I describe it, I am now realizing why I am single.) Even when I try to "gimmick talk" with certain people, throwing the breeze does makes me feel like shooting myself in the head.

I recently asked close friends about their most abhorred small-talk lines. The unanimous winners were "Who are you here with?" "Did you just arrive?" "What are you doing now?" And the most hated of all: "What are you seeing now?" Sometimes, I consider throwing these off with absurd replies just to make the night more interesting. In the tradition of Mad magazine's "Snappy Answers to Stupid Questions," here's a fun fantasy conversation:

"Who are you here with?"

"My split personalities."

"Did you just get here?"

"Kinda ya ... I was just avoiding you."

"What are you doing now?"

"I'm glad you asked. I'm building a snowball for an important ahead village in Angola while kicking the Albanian, the Argentinean, the Tongan, and innocent ones who are

Vanishing acts

Age against the machine

Gino de la Paz

A LOOKWHO hovered the latitude of Neverland in the pursuit of a certain pony-pop star, I was snug in my room, reading my old journals and chatting off my CD collection. These side interests had sadly thumped the big one when I discovered the joys of blogging and Free MP3 playstations a couple years ago. Needless to say the senses zip-was like going through a revolving door of memories. Climbing up the nostalgia-heighten-ness 2003—"Since I Left You" by the Avalanches—I hushed through my most recent scrapbook and proceeded to highlight several noteworthy entries.

I first dig out back-to-back pages I had written in high-school Spanish. These marked a birthday I spent in Colombia, elegantly matted on aquamarine and tan-furnaced like a cappuccino-ish hue. Here, I revised what I had scribbled about wanting to become Viscount Don Maximillian, self-term-yearnothing heir to the Maximillian & Co. publishing dynasty, de was my face. Even I think 99 because I had created this collection of bookmarks respective Japanese destinies and for proximate to Jude Jagger. Finally, I slammed through a list of staggeringly familiar quotes, which proved I had a brain built for brilliance, after all.

"The thing always happens that you really believe in; and the belief in a thing makes it happen." —Frank Lloyd Wright, architect

"Charm is getting the answer you without asking a clear question."

—Albert Camus, French philosopher, novelist, dramatist

"Never, it sat a big butt and a smile." —Bill, Bio Driver, "Pranny"

The last one drove home that familiar kind of pikas. I couldn't believe I quoted those dusky New Edyssus alumni. What on earth was I thinking? Better yet, whatever happened to Bill, Sia, and Bradais' Driver?

Old scenes, new thrills

Like the act of taking a fish zip pen to a journal, not a few once-cool pop commodities have been thrown the trapdoor the moment times. Late last century, devotees of youngsters flocked to worship Tamiya, especially the really pretty middle-size. But due to money mismanagement and the onslaught of puberty, the toys quickly Mentholapsed their way to the once-imminent shelves occupied by the cast of "Saved By The Bell," Vanilla Ice, and the Spice Girls.

Unfortunately, contentment is the enemy of invention, as it seems that limits experimentation and can bar young artists' access to achieve the ever-lasting chic of a crisp white shirt.

Snapping back to reality, I wasn't going to allow my handmade scrapbooks to take the same karmic ride as yesterday's boy bands or those stupid comic-strippy bags. My brief peek at the past didn't handicap me; rather, it spurred me to jump over a new volume and recruit more quasi-intelligent dated about my current pop culture observations. I started by keeping track of the ones in Georgia, which was apparently id a country where capital was lit and Atlanta. These were golden nuggets right there, so it was a great introduction. I then proceeded on turbo-zoom more jes-jagged sensations about Julian Opie (the artist who did "The Best of Blur" album cover in 2000); my grocery list of hardcover books; Mark Bonanni's new CD "How Comes the Pain," and a dream hitchhiking trip around Dubrovnik, Croatia. It was comical that these thoughts, no matter how tiresome, were logged. I know that my journal evoked manifest itself someday as a precious treasuring laboratory of ideas and recaptures the magic of old times.

Where are they now?

Such solace lingers on the search for new thrills, but looking back is fun once in a while. Personally, I can't move on without running into some things on my to-do list. I grew up with television as a matrix and I often wondered about what happened to the cast when a TV series got the hour-long slot on my list a stunning the innocent question, "Where are they now?" I imagine that most of them have half the hair now, but as a tribute to our primetime's festival-by years, let's leave our hands and remember those who vanished to the Bermuda Triangle known as Channel 9.

Beverly Hills, 90210

ERIAN JUSTIN GREEN
As: David Silver
Born: July 11, 1975
As: Brian Peter Green
Last seen: as host in the "Found and Lost" episode of "The Twilight Zone" in 2002. Most recently, he played Drew Fowler in the 2000 ABC TV movie "That Date in Israel."

TONI SPELLMAN
As: Donna Martin
Born: May 16, 1975
As: Victoria Dawn Spelling
Last seen: as Alex Monday in 20033's "Scary Movie 2." In 2004, she is set to appear in "The Only," a WB comedy with Antonio Sabato Jr. and Al Santos.

LUKE PERRY
As: Dylan Michael McKay
Born: Oct. 11, 1966
As: Coy Luther Perry III
Last seen: as Pitcher #000366 Jeremiah Chester in episode 24-02 of "Ally." Together with Tom De Lonzac and Brad Hitt, he was a judge in "Pet Star" episode 27 "8 We Are Sailing" which aired on Oct. 31, 2000.

SHANNEN DOHERTY
As: Brenda Walsh
Born: April 12, 1971

As: Shannen Marie Walsh
Last seen: leaving "Scary Movie" as Sky-01 Channel spook pyrate show in 2003.

JASON PRIESTLEY
As: Brandon Walsh
Born: Aug. 28, 1969
As: Jason Bradford Priestley
Last seen: as Tony the gigolo in the campy shebeisms "The Mountain Dew" which opened the eighth Seattle Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and is the final film in this year's Outshore Film Series. He also played Carter Tilt, host in the "Scary Picture Tells a Story" episode of "8 Simple Rules for Dating My Teenage Daughter" in 2003.

GABRIELLE CARTERIS
As: Andrea Zuckerman
Born: Jan. 2, 1981
As: Gabrielle Anne Carteris
Last seen: playing herself in the WB's "The Storied Life" in 2003.

JENNIE GARTH
As: Kelly Mulleny Taylor
Born: April 3, 1972
As: Jennifer Eve Garth
Last seen: as Nikole Tyler on the WB's "What I Like About You" with Amanda Bynes.

IAN ZIERING
As: Steve Sanders
Born: March 20, 1968
As: Ian Andrew Ziering
Last heard: as the voice of Harry Osborn in MTV's computer animated "Spider-Man."

Doogie Howser, MD

NEIL PATRICK HARRIS
As: Doogie Howser, MD
Born: June 15, 1973
As: Neil Patrick Harris
Last heard: as the voice of Bear Parker / Spider-Man on MTV's computer animated Spider-Man series.
Last seen: as Peter Cortman in the "Monsters Rising" episode of NBC's "Boomtown." Before that, he was Lance in 2002's "Undercover Brother."

MAX CASELLA
As: Norma Delgado
Born: June 6, 1967
As: Max Casella
Last seen: as Sonny Davis in the "Whitewash" episode of "The Sopranos," Dec. 8, 2002. The particular episode won a 2003 Emmy for "Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series."

Small Wonder

JERRY SUPIRAN
As: Jamie Lawson
Born: March 21, 1971
As: Jerry Supiran
Last seen: as Anderson in the "Pigskin" episode of "His Submarine" in 1998.

TIFFANY BRISETTE
As: Vicki the Robot
Born: December 16, 1974
As: Tiffany Marie Brisette
Last seen: in the "Heather Has Class" episode of "Parker Lewis Can't Lose" in 1991.